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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

IMAGES OF SELF AS TEACHER IN SEVEN SELECTED NOVELS

BY

ELIZABETH ANNE SCHLENDER

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **MASTER OF EDUCATION.**

DEPARTMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL 1995

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DEGREE: **Master Of Education**

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: **1995**

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October 4, 1995

'This is the first class in English spelling and philosophy, Nickleby,' said Squeers, beckoning Nicholas to stand beside him.

'We'll get up a Latin one, and hand that over to you. Now then, where's the first boy?'

'Please, sir, he's cleaning the back parlour window,' said the temporary head of the philosophical class.

'So he is, to be sure,' rejoined Squeers. 'We go upon the practical mode of teaching, Nickleby; the regular education system. C-l-e-a-n, verb active, to make bright, to scour. W-i-n, win, d-e-r, der, winder, a casement. When the boy knows this out of book, he goes and does it. It's just the same principle as the use of the globes . . . . That's our system, Nickleby: what do you think of it?'

'It's a very useful one, at any rate,' answered Nicholas significantly.

'I believe you,' rejoined Squeers, not remarking the emphasis of his usher. 'Third boy, what's a horse?'

'A beast, sir,' replied the boy.

'So it is,' said Squeers. 'Ain't it, Nickleby?'

'I believe there is no doubt of that, sir,' answered Nicholas.

'Of course there isn't,' said Squeers. 'A horse is a quadraped, and quadraped's Latin for beast, as everybody that's gone through the grammar knows, or else where's the use of having grammars at all?'

'Where indeed!' said Nicholas abstractedly.

'As you're perfect in that,' resumed Squeers, turning to the boy, 'go and look after my horse, and rub him down well, or I'll rub you down. The rest of the class go and draw up water till somebody tells you to leave off, for it's washing day tomorrow, and they want the coppers filled.'

So saying, he dismissed the first class to their experiments in practical philosophy, and eyed Nicholas with a look half cunning and half doubtful, as if he were not altogether certain what he might think of him by this time.

'That's the way we do it, Nickleby,' he said after a long pause.

Nicholas shrugged his shoulders in a manner that was scarcely perceptible, and said he saw it was.

'And a very good way it is too,' said Squeers. 'Now, just take those fourteen little boys and hear them some reading, because you know you must begin to be useful, and idling about here won't do.'

Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, 1839

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the images of themselves-as-teacher adopted and constructed by fictional teachers in seven selected novels. I have addressed the question of how the choice of teaching as an occupation affects the way these characters feel, think and talk about themselves, their work, and their lives. The teachers in these novels reveal some deeply ingrained, limiting and repressive beliefs about teaching which seem not to have changed appreciably since the mid-nineteenth century. An important source of conflict for the teachers in this study is the degree to which they are unable to retain a sense of autonomy within the institution of public education, which is highly prescriptive, tradition-bound, and inflexible in its expectations. The authors of these novels do not show these teachers as having the freedom to participate meaningfully in the definition of the role of teacher.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful to Dr. John Oster, who spent a great deal of time helping me with the preparation of this thesis. He has been wise, thoughtful and sensitive in his comments and generous with his praise and support. I would also like to thank Dr. Margaret Iveson, who helped enormously both in the process of developing the research question and by her careful reading and insightful comments on this work. Dr. Jim Parsons and Dr. Roberta McKay extended encouragement and praise, and asked important questions which helped to clarify my thinking.

Thank you to my husband, my sons, and the rest of my family for being supportive and understanding when so much of my time and attention has been focused on this work.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction And Review Of The Idea

Overview: Why study novels about teachers?

> *We learn more from the profound descriptions of teaching as struggle and complexity than from caricature and stereotype. The teacher's voices, the visions of authors and filmmakers who probe deeply and imagine the intricate relationships among human beings--among teachers and students--may teach us much more about what it means to be a teacher.*
>
> *Joseph and Burnaford, 1994, p. 14)*

A person's sense of self as a teacher does not spring from a uniquely individual concept of self-definition as a professional, and our teaching practices are not the simple product of our intent or will. Rather, the work of several researchers suggests that our understandings of what it means to be a teacher stem from three main sources: from our unique personalities and development; from what we have learned from our family, community, and school histories; and from the messages in the culture that surrounds us. (Joseph and Burnaford, 1994; Carter, 1993). Most of us, after many years of schooling, can remember individual teachers vividly. We also hold impressions of teachers generated through the memories and imaginations of others. There are many novels which explore at length the lives, the concerns, the satisfactions, the frustrations and the pedagogical beliefs of fictional teachers, and which embody and transmit messages about what it means to be a teacher in that culture. The choices and the assumptions that influence an author's creation of a work of fiction in which a teacher is

the central character and is shown struggling to create a conception of teaching that she or he can live with are significant.

The rationale offered by Joseph and Burnaford for identifying and analyzing cultural images of teachers is simple and concise: "We do so because prospective teachers need to consider what it means to be schoolteachers--in their classrooms and within American society" (p. 5). I would advance the same argument for the value of close perusal of the likenesses of teachers in the novels of any culture. We as teachers need to surface and recognize the images that have been made available to us, both those that elevate and those that diminish the status of teaching, and come to terms with how these images have influenced us.

I believe that as educators of children, and educators of educators, we can become more self-aware and better able to manage the emotional content and the subconscious impact of the existing images of teachers when we mediate them consciously by critically examining how teachers are portrayed in the literary tradition. We can enhance our understanding of how our teacher identities and the images we carry in our minds about what a teacher is and does are formed, and appreciate the dialogic exchange between these identities and images and the cultural forces that both reflect and create them. The study of narrative is a way of exploring experience that can yield valuable understandings, as Carter (1993) argues.

> At one level, story is a mode of knowing that captures in a special fashion the richnesses and the nuances of meaning in human affairs. We come to understand sorrow or love or joy or indecision in particularly rich ways through the characters and incidents we become familiar with in novels or plays. This richness and nuance cannot be expressed in definitions, statements of fact, or abstract propositions. It can only be demonstrated or evoked through story. (p.6)

The Origins of the Study:

My interest in studying teacher characters in novels has evolved from, and has served to inform and to connect in a meaningful way, two co-emergent but initially quite distinct areas of interest. The first is my work with teacher-education students. In large part due to my own well-remembered struggles, which I see poignantly reflected in the aspiring teachers I have worked with for two years, I have perplexing questions about how to help these students remain integrated while moving into a way of life that requires them to make what is generally a huge cognitive and emotional shift in their perception of themselves. The other impetus driving this work is my interest in novels about teachers. I have been fascinated and disturbed by the representations of teachers that I have so far encountered in literature, and have felt a need to explore the connections between these fictional portrayals and the meaning of teaching to those of us who are teachers in actuality.

In order to subjectively experience themselves as teachers, teacher-education students must do much more than simply alter or add to existing aspects of their identities such as son or daughter, sister or brother, boyfriend, girlfriend, lover, spouse, student and/or friend. These are roles that seem to have built into them the expectation that they will be created, negotiated, and re-negotiated dialogically, a process that is understood to be learned and to take place gradually and continuously. These roles are, for most of us, constructed and defined with a great deal of information from family and the social environment about how to reconcile and negotiate the various images of self required by these roles.

Assuming the identity of teacher requires for many of these students, particularly those who are younger and therefore closer to their experiences in their families of origin and in school, that they learn to think of themselves quite abruptly in very different, possibly dissentient, ways. Where they have previously held views of themselves as at least somewhat dependent on others for support and help with decisions,

possibly antagonistic or rebellious toward parental and school authority, insecure, and uncertain about directing their own lives, they must begin to take on a role that appears to be populated by individuals who embody qualities that are quite different from these. From their previous student perspective, teachers may have been seen to embody a variety of possible traits, but these likely included qualities such as independence, confidence, decisiveness, support for the often antipathetic values of parents, the school, and the adult world, and a level of maturity that allowed them to deal with students, parents, colleagues and administrators with some degree of competence. This transition is for many beginning teachers an upset or reversal in self-image that might be seen as equivalent to the impact of becoming a parent. There are many career choices and training or educational programs that shift or add new layers to the existing construct of self, but few that require such a total re-definition of the self.

The task of going beyond primary ways of seeing our relationships to power and authority, and understanding how to think about the prescriptions and norms inherent in the identity of teacher, is a difficult task in itself, and is further complicated by cultural stereotypes of teachers and the lack of respect for teachers in North American society. The strong and pervasive normative discourses concerning teaching, along with the under-valuing of teachers and their work, is apparent throughout popular culture (O'Dowd and Beardslee, 1961; Belok and Dowling, 1961). Joseph and Burnaford (1994) compiled the work of fifteen researchers who have explored the portrayals of teachers in television commercials and situation comedies, music lyrics and videos, films and literature. They reached the conclusion that our society tends to flatten, polarize, and denigrate teachers, and impose rigid prescriptions for how to be a "good" teacher. Those of us who are or want to become teachers struggle to define our teacher identities within the constraints of how it has already been defined by all of the real and imaginary teachers who have come before us. These images affect how we see ourselves and how we portray ourselves to others.

Most teachers, although undoubtedly aware that schoolteachers are regularly portrayed in the cultural media, have not likely given serious consideration to the effect of these images. They may not realize that administrators, parents, community members, and the media quite possibly have notions about who teachers are and what they do based on personal memories or stereotypes which have no connection to what an individual teacher is or does. These responses from others have an effect on how teachers see themselves. Examining the image of teachers in our culture as represented in literature, films, music and commercials can help us to understand the power of this popular conception of teaching to limit our ideas about what is possible and to reinforce the given commonplaces. Joseph and Burnaford (1994) quote Lipsitz to elaborate on the notion of the hegemony of popular culture, and the process by which we adopt and assign normative power to these manufactured cultural images.

> Cultural forms create conditions of possibility, they expand the present by informing it with memories of the past and hopes for the future; but they also engender accommodation with prevailing power realities, separating art from life, and internalizing the dominant culture's norms and values as necessary and inevitable. (p.8-9)

The images of teachers in the popular culture express clearly the numerous and contradictory "shoulds" that permeate the meanings inherent in teaching. Teachers *should* allow students to develop their abilities and interests without interference, while maintaining quiet, order, and control. They *should* expect and ensure that students learn and perform well on standardized achievement tests as preparation for higher education or a good job, but they *should* present information and concepts only as students are ready for them, and in an interesting way. They *should* insist, without exception, on compliance with institutional policies, and at the same time be responsive to, and champions of, individual students' well-being and personal freedom. They *should* be pleasant to look at and wear attractive clothes, but only to a limited extent, because they

must maintain a completely professional and asexual presence and demeanor in the classroom. They *should* command obedience and respect, and also be warm, human, and flexible. They *should* be wise, strong, capable, and confident about what they want from, and for, themselves and students.

At the same time that images of teachers in the popular culture reinforce these prescriptions, they also deliver the message quite clearly that teachers often can't or don't do these things, and consequently fail as teachers and as people. They are frequently portrayed as ignorant of pedagogical theory, boring, pedantic, self-absorbed, immature, oblivious to student needs, excessively rule-bound, frustrated, unsatisfied, and even openly hostile and abusive to children. A "good" or "successful" teacher is almost invariably shown to be an unusual and noteworthy phenomenon in the midst of many mediocre or bad teachers.

Depictions of teachers in the cultural media both create and reinforce the dichotomy and the tension between the "shoulds", or *authoritative discourses*, and the perceptions, intents and desires of individual teachers, or *internally persuasive discourses*, a conflict discussed by Deborah Britzman (1991).[1] These images may cause teachers great anxiety, particularly student teachers who are just beginning to struggle with these contradictions. They believe that they should be able to adjust smoothly to these conflicting expectations, and when they have difficulty understanding how to do this, or find themselves wondering whether this is what they need or want to do as teachers, they feel like failures. It is not built into cultural images or institutional expectations that new teachers can take part in a dialogic process of defining and

---

1 Britzman's discussion of these two concepts has been important in shaping my understanding and discussion of the novels and the teacher characters in them. I will elaborate on Britzman's definition of these terms after my initial analysis of the individual novels.

shaping the role, rather than passively taking the shape of the existing mold.

This fact became strikingly obvious to me a year ago, when, at the instigation of a seminar on teachers in literature, I chose titles of novels about teachers, mostly from Yaakov's Fiction Catalog, Eleventh Edition (1986), and began to read. I read novels as diverse in time, place, and style as Villette (1853), a novel written By Charlotte Bronte about a teacher in a private boarding school for girls in Victorian England, to Irwin Shaw's Bread Upon The Waters, written in 1981 about a teacher in a large, American, inner-city high school. I did not deliberately select or pre-screen these novels except on the basis of which titles suggested in the fiction index happened to be readily available in our university library. I recognized the titles of some of them, but I had read few of them previously.

What I discovered was how extremely disquieting the image of the teacher that emerged in this fiction was for me. I found that after immersing myself in the worlds of teachers as created by novelists such as John Updike (The Centaur), E.M. Forster (The Longest Journey), Muriel Spark (The Prime Of Miss Jean Brodie), and William Inge (Good Luck, Miss Wyckoff), my predominant feelings were dismay and disappointment. Many of these teacher-characters were well-written and interesting, not necessarily flat or stereotypical, but as a whole they were not healthy, satisfied or well-rounded human beings. I strongly resented and resisted the relatively consistent portrayal of teachers as trapped, weak, depressed, and frustrated, if not more seriously maladjusted, and I was deeply moved by their struggles to create and define themselves as teachers in contexts that they experienced for the most part as unsympathetic, unsupportive, and repressive influences on their development as human beings and as teachers. I began to feel the strong tension between the discourses that controlled and defined what these teachers were free to do and be, and how they would have shaped their roles if they had perceived themselves as possessing the freedom to do so. It became apparent to me that there were

some strong conflicts being lived out in these teachers' minds and lives, and that for many of them, there was no satisfactory resolution to their questions, uncertainties, and consequent sense of failure. Another suspicion that began to emerge, based on novelists' depictions of teachers and the constraints and possibilities of the role, was that in some essential and important ways, images and attitudes about teaching seem to have remained relatively fixed since the middle of the nineteenth century, and probably much earlier.

These novels posed difficulties that I have been compelled to pursue. Why do novelists present teacher-characters with so many apparently self-defeating and ineffective approaches to teaching and to their lives? How pervasive is this image? Is there a relationship between artistic portayals of teachers and the self-concept of real teachers? Do the novels affect the view of teachers in our society, perhaps helping to create and perpetuate negative images? Or do they simply reflect this view? Has the dominant image of the teacher in novels changed in the last one hundred years? The external trappings of teaching--that is, the structure of schools, resources in classrooms, groupings of students and prevailing pedagogical beliefs--have changed, making the institution appear in some ways strikingly different. But the question of whether or not, and to what extent, teachers' feelings about themselves and teaching have changed, intrigued and puzzled me. Are there admirable and strong-minded, but not uni-dimensional and blindly idealistic, teacher-figures in the literature--human beings with frailties, who struggle with the existing norms of teaching, but who grow and learn, rather than being defeated? Is there something to be learned by looking at how teachers in novels construct and live out their images of themselves which might inform the thinking of both practicing and prospective teachers? Examining novels about teachers with such questions in mind, and finding out what conclusions others have reached in this regard, has been an exciting and worthwhile area of investigation.

Becoming cognizant of how novelists have depicted teachers and teaching in selected novels from the mid-nineteenth century through the present can help us to see ourselves, our roles and our standing in society in a broader context. Our personal teacher stories, and hence the images we construct of ourselves as teachers, are very firmly based in a historical tradition of teachers' stories. One way to access and to understand the impact of these stories is through the large body of existing fiction about teachers. Novelists reveal implicitly, or discuss explicitly, reasons why the teacher characters depicted became teachers; the value that they believe society places on the role of teacher; the images that they associate with the role of teacher; what it means to their understanding of themselves to identify themselves as a teacher; the conflicts they experience and their reactions to them; and their resultant sense of satisfaction or defeat.

The Question:

Looked at individually and collectively, these novels can tell us much about how the larger society views teachers. There are many possible approaches to excavating the powerful myths and the truths about teaching that they contain. My interest, however, lies in what we can learn about and from the images that teachers create and carry around with them of themselves as teachers, as evidenced by what novelists tell us explicitly; by what fictional teachers say to themselves or other characters; and by behaviours and interactions that we can interpret. What are the metaphors that they use in thinking about or describing themselves? What are the stories that they tell themselves about who they are and what they do? Are there some recognizable patterns or commonalities in these fictional teachers' images and stories that emerge in novels written since the mid-nineteeth century, and which seem to persist in spite of the tremendous changes in British and North American society during this same time frame?

One of the difficulties with understanding teaching is that many aspects of it are so deeply entrenched and assumed as to be invisible. It is these essential and fixed aspects of what it means to define oneself as teacher, and their impact on the teachers in the novels, that I hope to identify more explicitly in this study. The question I address in my examination of these novels is: *What are the significant and common attitudes, images, conflicts, and sources of pride or self-blame that emerge in the stories that the teachers in these novels construct to explain themselves to themselves and to others, in spite of obvious differences in style, characterization, plot, thematic intent, time period, geographic situation, and specific community and school teaching contexts of the novels?*

In order to approach this very abstract and general question in a meaningful and systematic way, and in order to avoid the temptation to become stuck in lengthy, unfocused analysis and interpretion of the various teacher characters, I have identified several discrete and more particular aspects of the question. By considering the following five sub-questions, I hope to be able to work toward some meaningful conclusions about the larger question:

1) Why did the teachers in these novels become teachers? Did they aspire to become teachers, or resign themselves to it? What do we know about their perception of the role before they became teachers, and the influences in their biography that led them to teaching?

2) What beliefs do they express or demonstrate about how the choice of teaching as a career will affect their status in society? In their perception, how does assuming the role of teacher influence the way others see and respond to them?

3) How do they perceive the role? What images or metaphors do they associate with themselves as teachers, with students, and with the role?

4) In these novels, what conditions or circumstances are perceived as sources of internal and/or external conflict by teachers? How do they think about and handle these conflicts, and how are they resolved?

5) Does their perception of how these conflicts are resolved, or not resolved, engender feelings of pride or self-blame, and are these feelings specific to their role as teacher, or do they determine the character's global sense of worth?

Limitations of the Novel as a Source of Data About Teachers:

There are, of course, several problems with analyzing fictional teachers and assuming any kind of transference or validity of findings to the understanding of real teachers.

1) The first and most obvious is that a fictional teacher is a creation, a product of the author's imagination. In a novel what we get is an author's impressions and representation of an imaginary teacher's thoughts and feelings, not a "real" teacher talking about "real" experience. While I can assume that novelists have some objective experience *about* teaching, I cannot assume that they have access to a teacher's subjective knowledge *of* teaching. This makes interpreting the third-hand, subjective impressions of teaching in the novels a very tricky and very slippery activity.

2) Another significant limitation is that I cannot assume that the novelists' primary intent is to represent the world of teaching. There are many factors that impinge on the choices an author makes during the creative process. Some of these are the influence of a tradition of literary conventions, the need for conflict as an element in the action and/or within characters and time and space constraints requiring economy of action and characterization. Much of the moment by

moment cataloguing and description of trivia is omitted, requiring the reader to understand that what is presented has significance beyond the specific incident or interaction described, and to fill in all the blanks that the author did not.

3) A third limitation of this research is that these teachers cannot answer specific questions that I might choose to ask, either at the time or after the fact. I have available to me the words that the author wrote and their meanings for me, nothing more. It is not possible to check with my research subjects to determine whether they agree that my perceptions, interpretations, and conclusions are plausible. A statement or an action in the novel that I may view as indicative of certain motives, or demonstrating that the teacher believes something to be true about her or himself, can only be verified by going back to the words written in the novel. It is necessary to utilize some conventions of literary interpretation and criticism along with the sensitivity and caution required of any researcher.

   This boundedness and fixed nature of the data itself can be seen as both a limitation, and an opportunity for fuller understanding. It may increase the validity of interpretation because the text (the data) can be rigorously and repeatedly examined, and the words themselves don't change. I can rely more on the depth and duration of the observation period than I could in dealing with flesh and blood teachers, whom I can observe and talk to generally over a limited period of time, and in a limited number of contexts. In addition, characters in novels will be likely to reveal themselves more fully. Researchers know that human beings like to present themselves in what they believe to be a favorable light. Characters in novels do not have the motivation of wanting to say or do what they believe a researcher is looking for.

4) The fact that I cannot check my interpretations of words and actions with the teachers themselves, or even with the novelist, implies that my

interpretations are limited by my own subjectivity. Everything about my personal history, my experiences, and my exposure to reading, among these the very important fact that I am a teacher, will influence the way I read and respond to the novels and interpret characters and events.

Assumptions:

There are certain things that I need to assume to be true for the purposes of this research which will make it possible to proceed:

1) We can learn something about the self-image of teachers from a study of these fictional teachers. There is some connection, however tenuous and ill-defined, between how the teachers in novels experience being teachers and how "real" teachers do.

2) Everything we read and view is internalized in some way, consciously or unconsciously, and becomes part of how we perceive and experience the world. As students, prospective teachers, veteran teachers or non-teachers we cannot help but be influenced in some way by the images of teachers in popular culture.

3) There will be important differences in British, Canadian, and American literature, and in the literature written during various time periods over the last century and a half. However, the primary influence on both literature and schooling in North America has been the white, Protestant, British tradition, so it seems not unreasonable to look for some common threads running through the literature. (This admittedly disregards the heterogeneity of cultural influences that have impacted North American culture, but the primacy of the British literary and educational heritage is undeniable.)

4) Despite these important concessions to the structure and the intent of a novel, I will proceed on the assumption that there is an attempt in each of these novels to help us to understand and interpret life through the novelist's artistic lens. Many have argued that the distillation of experience that goes into a work of art in some way makes the experience more universal and more comprehensible than isolated and individual "real" experiences. (Carter, 1993) The truth of a novel, and a test that literary critics invariably use, is to what extent it seems to illuminate some aspect of human experience that we recognize as having significance or relevance outside of the context of the particular novel or a particular character's frame of reference.

5) Another important assumption that I am making in attempting to generalize from the fiction to the lives of real teachers is that while the fictional teacher is a creation of a novelist's imagination, the identity of a real-life teacher is also an imaginary creation. There is no definitive or objective way to view ourselves or others as teachers. Many researchers (Britzman, 1994; Fischer & Kiefer, 1994; Joseph & Burnaford, 1994) have described the complex and amorphous process of creating a teacher identity from the many ingredients available to us. Both novelists and real teachers have access to many of the same ingredients for this creation: unique personality characteristics; many hours as students in classrooms watching teachers; listening to family and community members talk about teaching; and the images of teachers in art, music, literature, film, or television. Most of these same influences and raw materials are available to the novelist when a teacher character takes shape in her or his imagination. Although there will not be a direct correspondence, it is not unreasonable to assume that a novelist starts out with many of the same taken-for-granted definitions of teaching and the very powerful affective content of what it means to teach that a beginning teacher-education student

would. Teacher education will likely help a prospective teacher to rationalize some of the experience of teaching, and will presumably modify the ways that she or he will behave in the classroom to some extent, but it is arguable to what degree the time spent in formal preparation for teaching will alter the deeper levels of emotion and the whole-body, instinctive, and illogical responses to particular and immediate, rather than hypothetical, teaching encounters. In a very real sense, then, an author constructs a teacher in much the same manner that any of us constructs herself or himself as teacher.

6) There are literary conventions with regard to the structure of a novel that demand some degree of conflict and dramatic tension. Situations, personality attributes and responses might very well be exaggerated for dramatic effect. Because there is an expected degree of exaggeration, however, does not mean that the novelist is confined to depicting one type of conflict in novels about teachers, or that certain personality characteristics (such as depressive tendencies, sexual frustration, extreme passivity and submission to authority figures) will more likely be displayed by the teachers depicted than others. There are many sources of conflict, and many possible ways for characters to act on and react to the circumstances they are confronted with. Oster(1972) makes the point that teachers are sometimes depicted as personally maladjusted individuals, but that "Of course, the fact that they are ill-adjusted may be the reason why they are in the novels in the first place. Fiction is seldom written about people who have no problems" (p. 73). This may well be true, but it does not seem to go far enough in explaining the kinds of recurrent problems that I have so far seen emerging. Weak or maladjusted characters are interesting to novelists, but there is a broad range of personality types and possibilities for exterior or interior conflict available, as shown by the range of characters depicted across the full spectrum of novels. If the assumption is made that choices about personality traits and conflicts are not inherent in the tradition

of the genre, then it becomes necessary to look for some other explanation for the choices made.

Delimitations:

The boundaries of my examination of fictional teachers will be fixed as follows:

1) The source of fictional teachers explored will be full-length novels, because the scope of a novel usually allows for a fuller development of characters than a poem or short story by showing them in various contexts, interacting with a variety of other characters, and showing whether, or in what ways, their perceptions and behavior change over a given span of time.

2) The teachers will be central characters in the novels. There are many interesting fictional teachers who are secondary or minor characters in novels, but in general, there is more information given about central characters. The reader has greater access to their interior life of thoughts, feelings, self-awareness and self-assessment; a wider variety of situations in which to view their behaviour, and increased opportunity to watch how the characters develop over a period of time.

3) The teachers will be employed as classroom teachers in public or private grade schools. University or college professor characters will not be considered in this study, nor will coaches of sports teams, music or dance teachers, or other significant role models and mentors.

4) Classroom teaching will in some way be a significant concern of the novels chosen. Many novels provide a cursory overview of the protagonist's life to date, including the information that she or he is

a teacher, but this fact has very little relevance to the ensuing narrative, and development of the teacher character does not allow for any depth or richness of interpretation of the character *as teacher*. Since the intent is to examine how novelists portray the lives and self-images of schoolteachers, there must be sufficient information in the novels about how this decision has affected the characters' lives.

6) The time frame and geographical setting of the novels will be fairly broad. My task is not to examine all of the fictional teachers in novels within a specific time frame or geographic location. Rather, it is to look for commonalities among the teacher figures in diverse teaching contexts, and to notice if there seems to be a recognizable progression or important differences through this time frame.

Methodology:

I have addressed the questions that emerged from my reading of the novels regarding the images of themselves as teacher constructed by fictional teachers through close analysis of seven selected novels, focusing on the teacher characters, with particular attention to the metaphors they use to visualize and discuss their teaching; interactions in close relationships; responses to students, school administrators, and other authority figures; and the ways that they talk to themselves and others about teaching and about themselves as teacher.

It has been more productive for my purposes to examine the lives and the thoughts of a smaller number of individual teachers in depth, rather than to look at a larger number of fictional teachers in a more cursory way with the intention of counting, categorizing, and labeling specific and pre-determined phenomena. It seems to me to be of the utmost importance to try to plumb the emotional depths of these characters as far as possible within the limitations of the novelists' sensitivity, the fullness

and the emotional authenticity of their depictions of character, and the information that they provide. The most valuable information about these characters has come from listening attentively to their voices as they talk about what the experience of being a teacher means and feels like.

The novels that I selected for examination are Villette, by Charlotte Brontë; Spinster, by Sylvia Ashton-Warner; The Centaur, by John Updike; A Jest Of God, by Margaret Laurence; The Blackboard Jungle, by Evan Hunter; To Serve Them All My Days, by R. F. Delderfield; and Bread Upon The Waters, by Irwin Shaw. The individual novels were selected from among nineteen possibilities that I had chosen and read on a purely arbitrary basis as discussed earlier. The choice of seven to be discussed in detail was determined by several considerations. Originally, I chose the ones that had the strongest intellectual and emotional impact on me and which I believed were successful as novels, according to my own highly subjective and by no means definitive criteria. I found Lucy Snowe in Villette, Anna Vorontosov in Spinster, George Caldwell in The Centaur and Rachel Cameron in A Jest of God to be well-drawn and memorable characters, and their stories spoke strongly to me.

Although some of the other novels among the nineteen that I read appealed to me more as literature, I selected an additional three that I thought would add to my study in specific ways, and help to create a balance with regard to the gender of the teachers, the historical and cultural setting of the novels, and the points of view of the authors toward teaching. I chose The Blackboard Jungle by Evan Hunter for two reasons. It is a well-known novel that was made into a popular movie, and I felt that many people would be familiar with it. It is also a novel that is centered entirely around the classroom struggles of a beginning teacher. To Serve Them All My Days was included firstly because it was the one novel of the nineteen that I had read that was an unabashedly and entirely optimistic and positive view of teaching, and secondly because I wanted to explore some novels written in English that came out of the British literary and educational context, as Villette did. These two novels, along with Spinster,

which was written and set in New Zealand, would give some geographic and cultural scope to the small selection of novels in my study. Bread Upon The Waters seemed to be a good choice since it is more contemporary than the rest, and because Irwin Shaw is a popular novelist whose work is likely to be read by a fair number of people. All of these novels have been available in bookstores and public libraries for a period of time, and are likely to be available for some time to come. They can therefore be seen as contributing to the cultural and literary tradition of who teachers are and how they think about their work, which is the focus of this study.

After completing my initial reading of each of the nineteen novels, I made complete bibliographic entries and recorded significant incidents, thoughts and quotations on EndNote Plus (1993), which is software for a Macintosh computer that will generate a reference database and a bibliography. Reading nineteen novels consecutively which focused on the experiences of central characters who were teachers raised many questions that could have been explored, and at this point I tentatively identified and formulated the questions that I wanted to pursue. I read the seven novels that I selected for discussion a second time, and made more detailed notes with these questions in mind.

Decisions about how much and what information to include in an initial synopsis of the novel and analysis of the teacher character were guided by the questions I had identified, with allowance for the discussion of any other problems or issues raised in the novel which might help us to think about and understand the meaning of the difficulties and the triumphs of the particular teacher in a more helpful way. After this initial synopsis, analysis and interpretation of the novels separately, I attempted to explicate and synthesize some of the connections and the commonalities that emerged, with attention specifically to the reasons that the characters became teachers, the images they constructed, the important conflicts that emerged, the ways in which these conflicts were resolved, and the teachers' perceptions of whether these outcomes were positive or negative.

My particular approach to the analysis and interpretation of these novels is the outcome of my personal history and my exposure to literature, influenced by several theories of literary criticism. My formal study of literature at the university level was almost entirely grounded in the theories of New Criticicism, although it was never labeled or identified as such. According to proponents of the New Criticism such as I. A. Richards and T.S. Eliot, a proficient reading of a work of literature involves concentrating solely on the text and subjecting it to rigorous and objective examination. The best readings of any work are the cumulative product,over time, of the work of expert critics. An author's biographical or historical background and a reader's personal associations or emotional reactions to the text are considered extraneous to a competent interpretation of a work.

I have since come to understand the process of reading and responding to literature in a much less restrictive way as the result of some exposure to Feminist, Poststructuralist and Reader-Response theories of literary criticism. Rather than seeing the reader's job as unpacking the essential meaning that resides in a text, I understand reading as a dynamic interaction of an individual reader with a text. Each reader, during each encounter with a text, will construct a unique reading. My interpretation of the characters in these novels is necessarily subjective, based on my personal history and biological and psychological make-up; my previous exposure to language and to other literature; and my intentions, motivations, and expectations when I approach the novels. My readings of the novels and my conclusions about the fictional teachers have been informed and directed by these idiosyncratic factors, and as such, are not likely to be replicated by another reader. What I offer here are my interpretations and conclusions, along with enough of the original text that a reader may be able to see to some extent how I arrived at the interpretation that I did, and to decide whether this interpretation is reasonable or valuable.

CHAPTER TWO

Previous Research

Several researchers have looked at various aspects of how schoolteachers are portrayed in fiction, and have done an excellent job of uncovering how society perceives teachers as shown in these literary works. There are some common conclusions in these studies, and some common concerns expressed about the mostly negative view of teachers that emerges.

Frances Briggs (1962) does a thorough yet succinct job of locating her research by summarizing the changing kinds, purposes, and roles of schooling and the prevailing images of schoolmasters in the United States from the the seventeenth century through to 1960. She traces the growth of public schooling, starting with academies in New England during the colonial period, in which male teachers educated a relatively small number of selected and privileged young men, to the establishment of public high schools, intended for most members of a democratic society (theoretically male and female, and regardless of economic status), and which employed large numbers of female teachers, by 1860.

She begins by asking what the image is in American society of the public school teacher: "Is the American public school teacher merely the butt of jokes or the object of satire? Is he respected, revered, and rewarded? Is he accorded professional and social status like the doctor, the minister, or the lawyer?" (p. 19) She also asks whether changing educational emphases have been reflected in a changing concept of the school teacher as seen through the eyes of novelists.

Briggs' purpose is to trace how teachers have been "mirrored" and "reflected" in the literature, not to question the effects of these images on teachers. She summarizes the images of teachers created by novelists

during each of five time frames, beginning with a very general overview of the period from 1800 to 1900, and then focusing more closely on how teachers are depicted in more specific time frames within the general chronological period covered.

The self-image of teachers as revealed in autobiographies written from 1900 to 1960 are considered in a separate chapter. Her intent in this chapter is to compare the ways that teachers see themselves, as opposed to the views about them held by others as shown in the novels. The image of teachers during each of the time periods covered is analyzed with respect to teacher characteristics, interpersonal relationships, the type and amount of training the teachers have had, their social standing, the sizes and types of schools they teach in, and their attitude toward teaching.

Briggs presents several conclusions on the basis of her research:

1) That teachers, progressively, have come to recognize and accept their complex role as public school teachers.
2) That slowly but surely, teaching is gaining recognition as a profession in the social sciences.
3) That public school teachers in small communities have been, and still are, more subject to the community's image of what they are and should be than in larger urban centers.
4) That good teachers can earn status in the community, even if it doesn't come automatically attached to the role.
5) That there continues to be a need and a place for dedicated teachers.
6) That most teachers persist in teaching for teaching's sake.

Her study approaches the question of teacher image as a problem of discovering how teaching has been seen and defined by novelists, not as a problem of where this definition came from, or how teachers in the novels respond to it.

Clarence Johnson's (1966) study examines American novelists' treatment of the teacher's profession and environment. The intent of the study was to discover how American novels published between 1900 and

1950 portrayed teachers, their position in the school and the community, and the attitudes of novelists toward teachers as shown in these novels. Johnson identifies some general themes or concerns which emerge in novels about teachers depending on where they fall within the general time frame covered, which he sub-divides into three chronological periods for discussion: 1880 to WW I, WW I to WW II, and WW II to 1950. He finds that each of these periods contains its own particular images of teachers, but also recognizes that some novelists provide portraits that are inconsistent with the generally accepted images of each of these periods.

The factors he considers in his analysis of the novels are the teachers' relationships with students; their educational theory and how it is applied in classrooms; their relationships with associates; the relationship between the teacher and the community in which they live and work; and how teacher's private lives are depicted. He follows the changes and the shifts in emphasis on these various concerns in novels through the three stated time frames.

Johnson's findings about the general attitudes of novelists toward teachers are:

1) The early novelists were critical of teachers in general and saw teaching as an unrewarding occupation.
2) From WW I to WW II, novelists began to recognize and applaud the efforts of individual teachers to improve their profession and their communities, while becoming more critical of most teachers, whom they portrayed as "timeservers" or "opportunists."
3) After World War II, "Although novelists still admired the dedicated teacher, this admiration was often tempered with regret for the hopelessness of the teacher's efforts" (p.193).

His concluding disclaimer is that although the image of the teacher in the novel undoubtedly reflects the image of the actual teacher in some cases, since novelists create their characters out of their own actual or imagined experiences, it is not possible to state with confidence how closely the

changing image of the teacher in the novel parallels the changes in the image of the actual teacher.

Robert Hendon (1967) approaches the study of teacher figures in American novels from an existential perspective, analyzing and evaluating them according to the extent to which they meet two criteria: 1) Do they evidence existential awareness and an acceptance of the responsibilities of human freedom? and, 2) Do they make this awareness and responsibility central to their teaching? His understanding of existentialist philosophy is defined through references to the work of Jean Paul Sartre and Martin Buber. Teachers are measured by the extent to which they understand the responsibility of an "I-Thou" relationship with others, and have the courage to relate to students on the basis of this awareness.

Hendon examines several teacher figures created by novelists in the 1920's, 1930's, and 1940's. The majority of the teachers he discusses are secondary characters, but they are an interesting sample of fictional teachers, and Hendon's analysis is detailed and thorough. His conclusion is that " In the works selected, the best of the teachers on any such scale as is ideally posed by an educative principle demonstrate only a limited success." (p.97) The majority of the teachers fail this test dismally. They lack the courage to exercise their human freedom or to share knowledge of it with their students, and most lack even the prerequisite awareness. He does not believe that his findings reflect positively on teachers:

> After examining the figure of the teacher in American literature existentially, through the mind's eyes of several of our major authors, it would appear that our educational goals too often are limited by our own failure of vision of ourselves as human beings and as teachers. (p. 110)

Ralph Himsl (1968) examined teacher characters in a wide range of Canadian fiction in English. He did not delimit his study to a specific time frame, geographic area, or genre. He does mention that a limitation of his

study is that he was unable to find or study all of the relevant fiction, but he does not specify the basis on which his sample was chosen. His objective was to look at references to teachers in fiction, and to determine the significance of these references to teaching in present-day Canada. He examined the fiction in an attempt to find information relevant to seven questions:

1) What are the pedagogical values shown by the teachers?
2) What is the teacher's status in the rural pioneer community?
3) How is this status affected as the setting moves to an urban community?
4) What is the effect of his/her status in the community on the teacher's work in the classroom?
5) Is there a school teacher stereotype in Canadian literature?
6) What relevance do the values emphasized by these writers have in assessing the effectiveness of teachers?
7) What relevance do the values emphasized by these writers have in stimulating the professional development of teachers?

Himsl found a high degree of consensus among Canadian authors supporting the opinion that teachers in Canadian schools are not scholarly. True scholars do not teach; if they do, they do so only for a short time and then move on to more worthy pursuits. Even the teachers themselves for the most part believe that they have failed to achieve worthwhile academic goals. As a source of inspiration to young people, the teacher is largely unsuccessful. Students looked to other members of the community for their heroes and role models. The professional training and the professional commitment of teachers are both seen as sadly inadequate. The professional and social status of teachers is low, and they almost always display an awareness of their inferiority to other professionals. Humorous and satirical portraits of teachers rely on showing the teacher straining for acceptance, recognition and respect. Pedagogical values seem to pertain almost entirely to the ability to discipline students. Teachers who

are weak or incompetent often resort to corporal punishment, which is almost always viewed negatively by the author.

His conclusion is not an optimistic one--he found the over-all view of teachers in fiction by Canadian authors a depressing one. He says that the picture is not a new one; however, "the picture of ineffectiveness is so definite that the observer senses that he reads an expression of a 'mother wit' that needs to be recognized" (p. 101-2). Finally, he points out that even if it could be argued that these authors' views of teachers are inaccurate, that the significance of these portrayals should not be ignored or underestimated, because these expressions of attitudes and feelings have an existence of their own.

John Oster's (1972) study is more bounded geographically than others in the area of the image of the teacher in fiction. He considered the image of the teacher as revealed in 70 novels set in Canada's prairie provinces and published between 1921 and 1971. The selection of novels from a very specific time frame and geographic region allows for the construction of a very comprehensive picture of how teachers were presented in the literature within the scope of his study. He discusses the characterization of teachers in these novels from four different perspectives:

1) The role of the teacher in prairie novels in general, how they are seen in their personal lives and relationships, and any notable physical and/or personality traits.
2) Their professional lives.
3) Their influence on young people as role models and mentors.
4) Teacher-community relationships (i.e., status, and acceptance or rejection of these teachers by the community).

On the basis of his analysis and interpretation of the novels, Oster found many recurring characteristics in these teachers. Approximately two-thirds of the teachers are women, their romantic life is often the central concern of the novel, and they can be seen as representing one of

six basic types: romantic heroines, romantic sirens, aging rebels, old maids, aspiring academics, and married women. The emphasis is on personal rather than on pedagogical qualities and struggles. The male teachers that do appear are usually shown to be more effective teachers than the females, but they are considered somewhat effeminate, and are not typically described as physically strong or attractive. Romance is not as important in the lives of fictional male teachers as it is for females.

These novelists present certain traits as defining good teachers, such as enthusiasm for teaching, personal warmth, responsiveness to students, and concern about students' lives both in and out of school. Successful teachers make curriculum decisions according to the needs and interests of their students, rather than blindly following policies and school board mandates. This is a common source of conflict in these novels, since administrators are seen as self-important and pompous, often hampering the efforts of teachers to establish and teach according to their own educational vision.

Students' positive or negative view of a teacher, and the satisfaction of teachers with their jobs, both seem to depend on the quality of student-teacher relationships, which seems to reinforce Hendon's (1967) assertion that this relationship carries with it an important responsibility. Teachers are often portrayed as mentors to students in these novels; but even when their intentions are good, their influence is not always seen as clearly positive if they do not display the awareness and courage required to help or guide a young person who needs it.

In his overview of the fiction in the fifty years previous to 1971, Oster sees the status of the teacher in Western Canada as still indeterminate. He points out that there are many factors that have influenced, and will influence, the status of teachers, but that in the fiction he studied the most important determiners of status are the teacher's personal attributes.

> A teacher must be respected as an individual if he is to be respected as a teacher. Thus the quality of the individuals attracted to the position appears to be an even greater

determinant of the status of teaching than years of professional training or salary earned. (p. 183)

Ray Rust (1972) also studied the image of the teacher in novels set in the Canadian prairie provinces, and during the same general time frame as Oster's. His study included eighteen novels set on the prairies between 1924 and 1970 in which a teacher or teachers played a significant role. The aim of his study was to analyze the novels with respect to what non-teachers said about teachers, not what they said about themselves. He identifies several significant qualities inherent in the particular teaching context of these novels: the environment; the nature and character of the people; attitudes toward work; the roles of women, men, and children; the nature of romantic and sexual encounters; ethnic friction; mistrust of the urban; and the stubbornly optimistic orientation toward the future, or the "next-year" phenomenon. He then presents evidence about how adults and children in the novels (separately) regard schooling and teachers.

Rust's conclusions were that teachers' lives were lonely, even when surrounded by many people; their work was not considered important; teachers were not respected or accepted as equals by other adult citizens; certain higher standards of conduct were expected of teachers than of other adults; their rights and privileges were not considered important; they were not allowed autonomy in the running of their classes or in decisions of a professional nature; and working conditions, in term of class loads, parental support, and physical facilities, including living accommodations, were often intolerable. Rust asserts that titles like "headmaster" or "schoolmaster" would be inappropriate and misleading if used to refer to the fictional teachers in these prairie novels, since for him these titles seem to connote a degree of respect and social status that he did not find accorded to prairie teachers in the novels he read.

There are many differences in the details of what these researchers discovered about the portrayal of teachers in fiction, but it became evident to me after reading these studies that the role of teacher is seen as a

difficult and isolating one; that teachers are not for the most part viewed as dynamic, emotionally healthy and intellectually vital people; and that teachers are not generally held in high esteem either by their students or the community they live and work in.

After reading these studies, which focused almost exclusively on the portrayal by novelists of the role of the teacher as seen by others, it seemed that an area of investigation that had been largely ignored was how teachers in fiction are shown to understand the role of teacher, and how it affects the way they think and feel about themselves when they move into the role. The intent of this study is to look at the role of teacher and the construction of a teacher identity through the perceptions and imaginations of teachers as created by novelists.

CHAPTER THREE

An Introduction To The Teacher Figures In Seven Novels

Villette: Charlotte Brontë (1853)

I will begin my examination of how the teacher-characters in seven novels understand the role of teacher, and the images they hold of themselves as teacher, with a discussion of Lucy Snowe, the narrator of Charlotte Brontë's Villette. I did not select this work as a starting point because the choice of teaching as a profession for Lucy, or her thoughts and feelings about what it means to be a teacher, are the most important concerns of the novel. Villette comes very close to falling within that category of novels mentioned that introduce teaching as background knowledge about the character, but do not directly consider the act of teaching itself or explore in depth the character's definition of themselves as teacher. However, it is important to include it in this study for several reasons. It is a detailed psychological portrait of a heroine--perhaps more correctly, an anti-heroine--who is also a teacher. The action and the conflict in the novel do not arise primarily from Lucy's role as a teacher, but she does define herself and her social relationships in terms of her identity as a teacher. It provides a vivid and memorable snapshot of the life of a teacher through the perceptual lens of an archetypal British schoolmistress in 1853. Lucy's expressed beliefs, her unconscious knowledge of the roles of student and of teacher, and the ways that adopting the identity of teacher are shown to impact her, both personally and socially, are concerns and themes that will be dealt with in various ways in later novels. The novel has been recognized as possibly the best written by Charlotte Bronte, a novelist who helped to define the genre for future writers. It has been read by students and teachers of literature,

critics, and the reading public for a century and a half, so it seems not unreasonable to look to Villette when discussing how teachers in novels see themselves.

Lucy Snowe is a psychologically complex creation. She is comfortable watching life happen from the wings, aloof and unobtrusive, actively avoiding center stage. She introduces and describes the characteristics, the physical appearance, and the activities of people around her in detail, but about herself she is vague to the point of being mysterious. In the first chapter, we learn very little about Lucy, except that she makes regular visits to her godmother's house in Bretton (her godmother's name is also Bretton) and that "the house and its inmates specially suited me"(p. 61). Lucy likes it because it is peaceful, clean, and orderly, but most importantly, because life there is quiet and predictable.

> The charm of variety there was not, nor the excitement of incident; but I liked peace so well, and sought stimulus so little, that when the latter came I almost felt it a disturbance, and wished rather it had still held aloof. (p. 62)

Life is something that happens to those around Lucy, not to herself. She is an observer, noticing and recording subtleties of mannerisms and relationships very carefully, but she does not see herself as a participant or a functioning member of the household she describes. Although the novel is narrated by Lucy in the first person, she does not even disclose her name until the second chapter.

Lucy's repeated references to herself, directly and indirectly, as cool, unemotional, unimaginative, and detached, very soon acquire the ring of denial and self-delusion on her part. She watches with interest the transparent flux of emotions in six-year-old Paulina, Mrs. Bretton's other houseguest, when her father appears unexpectedly. "These sudden, dangerous natures--*sensitive* as they are called--offer many a curious spectacle to those whom a cooler temperament has secured from participation in their angular vagaries" (p. 70). Paulina has been desperately lonesome for her father, and they do not hide the happiness

they feel in being together. Lucy expresses her approval of their restraint, and her discomfort with any display of emotion, no matter how understated.

> It was not a noisy, not a wordy scene: for that I was thankful; but it was a scene of feeling too brimful, and which, because the cup did not foam up high or furiously overflow, only oppressed one the more. (p. 71)

When Mr. Home, Paulina's father, leaves for Europe without her, Lucy describes the little girl's agony, Mrs. Bretton's sympathetic, motherly tears, Graham's concern, and finally, her own reaction. "I, Lucy Snowe, was calm" (p. 79).

Later, when Paulina's father sends for her to join him in Europe, and Lucy realizes the depth of the little girl's attachment to Graham, Mrs. Bretton's sixteen-year-old son, Lucy worries about the child's lack of defenses against a cruel world. "'How will she get through this world, or battle with this life? How will she bear the shocks and repulses, the humiliations and desolations, which books, and my own reason tell me are prepared for all flesh?'" (p. 93). Lucy's own most constant characteristics are her ability to wear a mask of perfect composure at all times and to protect and distance herself from the expression of love, hope, sorrow, pain, or any strong feeling, along with her image of herself as an insubstantial shadow, which she alternately accepts and rebels against. They determine the course of her relationships throughout the book, and will become staple ingredients in the creation of her teacher identity. In Lucy's mind, the ability to appear strong, calm, and self-possessed are the qualities that a successful teacher needs.

There is a large gap in Lucy's narrative between the time she leaves Bretton to go back home at fourteen and when she picks up her story again eight years later. We know that during this time, she has experienced several tragedies that have left her with no family or money, and that a change in Mrs. Bretton's circumstances have severed that connection as a possible source of support. A brief and fairly peaceful interlude follows

when Miss Marchmont, a "rheumatic cripple" who lives nearby, hears about Lucy's situation and offers her a position as companion and nurse. Lucy becomes attached to her, but the tranquility of her stay there is ended when Miss Marchmont dies.

Lucy's comments about the impending frustration of her meagre hopes, and her chillingly bleak view of her future, are evidence of her belief that rather than being responsible for directing her own life, she is the helpless victim of powerful and implacable forces.

> I would have crawled on with her for twenty years, if for twenty years longer her life of endurance had been protracted. but another decree was written. It seemed I must be stimulated into action. I must be goaded, stung, forced to energy. My little morsel of human affection, which I prized as if it were a solid pearl, must melt in my fingers and slip thence like a dissolving hailstone. My small adopted duty must be snatched from my easily contented conscience. I had wanted to compromise with Fate: to escape occasional great agonies by submitting to a whole life of privation and small pains. Fate would not be so pacified; nor would Providence sanction this shrinking sloth and cowardly indolence. (p. 97)

It is a sad and revealing commentary on teaching as a lifestyle that given Lucy's passive approach to life, and her expectation of nothing but the most dreary existence, that teaching is what she ends up doing.

Lucy's report of Miss Marchmont's death and her reaction to it are typically understated. "My mistress being dead, and I once more alone, I had to look out for a new place. About this time I might be a little--a very little, shaken in nerves" (p. 103). She admits objectively that she is not looking well, "but on the contrary, thin, haggard, and hollow-eyed." She does not, however, admit to the feelings that would explain this appearance. She takes stock of her resources, realizes that she is in a difficult position, but refuses to allow herself the luxury of grief, fear, or self-pity. Instead, she lectures herself on how much she does have. "The possessor, then, of

fifteen pounds; of health though worn not broken, and of a spirit in similar condition; I might still, in comparison with many people, be regarded as occupying an enviable position" (p. 103).

Lucy decides that since she has absolutely nothing to cling to or to leave behind, she can make the first real decision in her life. She travels first to London, and then, propelled by her own daring, to Belgium, hoping to find some means of earning a living. Through a series of misadventures and lucky coincidences, she finds her way to Madame Beck's "pensionnat", or boarding school, where she is employed first as a nursery "bonne" to Madame Beck's children, and then as a teacher. Lucy initially has no desire to teach; when offered the chance to move from the nursery to the classroom, her natural inclination is to resist the change. "If left to myself, I should infallibly have let this chance slip. Inadventurous, unstirred by impulse of practical ambition, I was capable of sitting twenty years teaching infants the hornbook, turning silk dresses, and making children's frocks" (p. 139-40). She forces herself to try it, mainly in defiance of a direct challenge to her courage by Madame Beck, and because the position offers more prestige and financial reward than that of nursery attendant.

The description of Lucy's first teaching experience is very familiar in the emotions it arouses in her, and in the classroom atmosphere it portrays, if not in its specific details. Many of the common-sense truths that have survived, and have informed the ways that teachers think and behave in the classroom for so long, are clearly demonstrated in the struggle of wills that Lucy engages in, and her consequent victory. Madame Beck warns Lucy that these girls are difficult pupils, and that "they always throw over timid teachers." Lucy replies that she is well aware of what she will be facing. "'I have heard how they rebelled against and persecuted Miss Turner'" (p. 141). These sentiments are echoed in thoughts expressed by teachers in countless fictional and real-life settings since Villette was written.

It is expected that Lucy will survive in the classroom--or not--entirely on the basis of her instinctive ability to take control, and to demonstrate that she is a proper teacher. She has no formal preparation of any kind, only a short period of time to observe how the school functions and how teachers and students are expected to behave, and very little advance notice. The only advice that Madame Beck has to offer is the following caveat: "'You will not expect aid from me, or from any one,' said Madame. 'That would at once set you down as incompetent for your office.'" Lucy says that after escorting her to the classroom, "Madame Beck introduced me in one cool phrase, sailed from the room, and left me alone in my glory" (p. 142). Miss Turner, "a poor, friendless English teacher, whom madame had employed, and lightly discarded" is held up as an example of a teacher whose qualities made her entirely unsuitable, and who as a consequence did not survive. "'Miss Turner had no more command over them than a servant from the kitchen would have had. She was weak and wavering; she had neither tact nor intelligence, decision nor dignity. Miss Turner would not do for these girls at all'" (p. 141-2). Lucy can expect no instruction; cannot even expect to have her errors pointed out to her. One of the first things she notices about the school is Madame Beck's deceptively mild and easy-going but extremely ruthless style of leadership. "Neither masters nor teachers were found fault with in that establishment; yet both masters and teachers were often changed: they vanished and others filled their places, none could explain how" (p. 135).

Lucy's first impression of her students is not reassuring. She is anticipating resistance and conflict, and her perceptions confirm this expectation.

> As I mounted the estrade (a low platform, raised a step above the flooring), where stood the teacher's chair and desk, I beheld opposite to me a row of eyes and brows that threatened stormy weather--eyes full of an insolent light, and brows hard and unblushing as marble. (p. 142).

Lucy ascribes to the girls a level of sophistication, a degree of malice, and a conscious awareness of their motives that may or may not have been the case, but which serves to explain the situation to her satisfaction.

> They knew they had succeeded in expelling obnoxious teachers before now; they knew that madame would at any time throw overboard a professeur or maitresse who became unpopular with the school--that she never assisted a weak official to retain his place--that if he had not strength to fight, or tact to win his way--down he went: looking at 'Miss Snowe' they promised themselves an easy victory. (p. 142-3)

Teaching to Lucy is inherently adversarial. The students are naturally waiting to pounce, and willing to use any revealed vulnerability against the teacher.

In order to protect herself, and emerge the victor from this war, Lucy believes that she must guard against exposing any weakness, must immediately take the offensive, and must not hesitate to use any available weapons on students, before they have an opportunity to use them on the teacher. Lucy feels that her limited fluency in the French language makes one weapon that she might have used to squash"this growing revolt of sixty against one" unavailable to her; because, in the first place, "though I knew I looked a poor creature, and in many respects actually was so, yet nature had given me a voice that could make itself heard, if lifted in excitement or deepened by emotion." In the second place, in English she could have "rolled out readily phrases stigmatizing their proceedings as such proceedings deserved to be stigmatized" (p. 143).

She is forced to rely on decisive action rather than words to assert her dominance in the classroom, and wastes no time in weighing alternatives or worrying about the effects of her actions on her students. Lucy scans the room, decides who the most troublesome girls are, and surprises them with two quick attacks designed to instill fear and respect for her invincibility.

All I could do now was to walk up to Blanche--Mademoiselle de Melcy, a young baronne--the eldest, tallest, handsomest, and most vicious--stand before her desk, take from under her hand her excercise book, remount the estrade, deliberately read the composition, which I found very stupid, and as deliberately and in the face of the whole school, tear the blotted page in two.

This action availed to draw attention and check noise. One girl alone, quite in the background, persevered in the riot with undiminished energy. I looked at her attentively. She had a pale face, hair like night, broad strong eyebrows, decided features, and a dark, mutinous, sinister eye: I noted that she sat close by a little door, which door, I was well aware, opened into a small closet where books were kept. She was standing up for the purpose of conducting her clamor with freer energies. I measured her stature and calculated her strength. She seemed both tall and wiry; but, so the conflict were brief and the attack unexpected, I thought I might manage her.

Advancing up the room, looking as cool and careless as I possibly could, in short, *ayant l'air de rien,* I slightly pushed the door and found it ajar. In an instant, and with sharpness, I had turned on her. In another instant she occupied the closet, the door was shut, and the key in my pocket. . . . Then--when I had gravely and tranquilly returned to the strade, courteously requested silence, and commenced a dictation as if nothing at all had happened--the pens travelled peacefully over the pages, and the remainder of the lesson passed in order and industry. (p. 143-4)

Both Lucy and Madame Beck, who has been listening and spying on the new English teacher the whole time, are pleased and satisfied with this proof of Lucy's teaching abilities. Meeting this challenge, and taking over her new duties, gives Lucy an unfamiliar sense of competence. At this point, she comes as close as she is able to expressing enthusiasm and an active enjoyment of life that is more than just the absence of pain. "It was

pleasant. I felt I was getting on; not lying the stagnant prey of mould and rust, but polishing my faculties and whetting them to a keen edge with constant use" (p. 145).

Lucy sees her job as consisting of two main functions. The first is to find ways to subdue rebellious tendencies in her students, which she feels both determined and able to do.

> After the first few difficult lessons, given amidst peril and on the edge of a moral volcano, that rumbled under my feet and sent sparks and hot fumes into my eyes, the eruptive spirit seemed to subside, as far as I was concerned. My mind was a good deal bent on success: I could not bear the thought of being baffled by mere undisciplined disaffection and wanton indocility, in the first attempt to get on in life. Many hours of the night I used to lie awake, thinking what plan I had best adopt to get a reliable hold on these mutineers, to bring this stiff-necked tribe under permanent influence. (p. 146)

Her second major responsibility is to correct and improve her students. However, her teaching strategy is based on her acceptance of the futility of trying to force "this swinish multitude"--her students--to take any interest in learning, or to expend any serious mental effort. "Severe or continuous mental application they could not, or would not, bear; heavy demand on the memory, the reason, the attention, they rejected point-blank" (p. 146). She decides that the most sensible course is not to fight against the existing system, and to tolerate the students' laziness. She will assign only lessons requiring a minimum of effort by students; when they refuse to do even that much, she will not argue with them, but use another method to obtain her ends.

> A teacher who understood her business would take it back at once, without hesitation, contest, or expostulation--proceed with even exaggerated care to smooth every difficulty, to reduce it to the level of their understandings, return it to them thus modified, and lay on the lash of sarcasm with unsparing hand. (p. 146-7)

She believes that the way to improve these girls is to make them ashamed of their "incapacity, ignorance, and sloth," and sees no harm in humiliation, which is expected and even healthy.

> I noticed that whenever a pupil had been roused to feel in her soul the stirring of worthy emulation, or the quickening of honest shame, from that date she was won. If I could but once make their (usually large) ears burn under their thick, glossy hair, all was comparatively well. (p. 147).

This view that the duty of a teacher is to correct the character deficiencies and innate "badness" of young people through lecturing, sermonizing, and shaming--in much the same way that a missionary's duty is to save sinful heathens and point out their wickedness--is a very deeply ingrained religious and philosophical tradition. It is not hard to see the influence of this western European, Christian religious tradition in our agencies of formal, public education, and in our literary tradition.

Throughout the passages in which Lucy describes her first teaching encounters , the images she uses are predominantly military. The girls "promise themselves an easy victory," and "Mesdemoiselles Blanche, Virginie, and Angélique opened the campaign." Lucy's command -- her position as Madame Beck's "lieutanant"--is threatened by a "growing revolt of sixty against one," and the students become a "mutinous mass" and "mutineers." She sees herself as the one intelligent, civilized person in the room. It is her job to tame the "wild herd," to keep watch over the lazy and stupid "swinish multitude," and to govern the "stiff-necked tribe." Teaching is as precarious as standing on a volcano, "that rumbled under my feet and sent sparks and hot fumes into my eyes" (p. 146). None of these metaphors suggest anything but the most impersonal, antagonistic relationships in the classroom, although Lucy does say that once she had put them properly in their places, the girls showed no animosity, and indeed gradually became friendly.

The images that she has of herself as teacher are just as negative as the ones of her students, but are possibly even more disturbing. She talks

about the stoicism and emotional numbness she needs to survive, and the "catalepsy and dead trance" of her existence (p. 175). In her mind, a teacher lives a life of voluntary imprisonment.

> Those who live in retirement, whose lives have fallen amid the seclusion of schools or of other walled-in and guarded dwellings, are liable to be suddenly and for a long while dropped out of the memory of their friends, the denizens of a freer world. (p. 348)

The teacher/prisoner then becomes in Lucy's imagination a hermit living in isolation, "stagnant in his cell." The loneliness of her existence becomes even more painful when we understand that in Lucy's mind the hermit has no responsibility for keeping in touch with the world. If others remember his existence, that is good, but if he is forgotten, there is nothing he can do.

> The hermit--if he be a sensible hermit--will swallow his own thoughts, and lock up his own emotions during these weeks of inward winter. He will know that Destiny designed him to imitate, on occasion, the dormouse, and he will be conformable; make a tidy ball of himself, creep into a hole of life's wall, and submit decently to the drift which blows in and soon blocks him up, preserving him in ice for the season. (p. 348)

When others do remember his existence, "perhaps, one day, his snow-sepulchre will open, spring's softness will return," and he will be thawed and re-awakened by their attention (p. 348). But not necessarily; "*Perhaps* this may be the case, perhaps not: the frost may get into his heart and never thaw more; when spring comes, a crow or a pie may pick out of the wall only his dormouse-bones" (p. 349). Lucy thinks of teaching as a lonely and alienated existence, not as a career that is based on establishing relationships with other human beings.

The work of teaching keeps Lucy busy, and is a welcome diversion. It forces her to interact with other people more, rather than living entirely in her own head, for a time. However, teaching does not become something that she does to connect with others, or to build relationships. After the initial novelty of meeting the challenge, it becomes a source of

income, not satisfaction, for Lucy. She soon resumes her habit of losing herself for long periods of time in morose reflection. Regarding her life and her future as a teacher, Lucy has this to say: "About the present, it was better to be stoical: about the future--such a future as mine--to be dead. And in catalepsy and a dead trance, I studiously held the quick of my nature" (p. 175)." She admits to self-indulgent periods of longing "for something to fetch me out of my present existence, and lead me upwards and onwards." However, these feelings were to be fought against, not dwelt on. "This longing, and all of a similar kind, it was necessary to knock on the head; which I did, figuratively" (p. 176). She can envision only two alternatives to her present situation: one is that either Graham Bretton or M. Paul Emanuel--the two men in her life--will rescue her; the other is that she will manage to save enough money to open her own little school.

Lucy's description of her experiences reveals not only her attitude toward teaching, her students, and her own learning; but also the difficulties faced by a reasonably educated, unmarried woman in Victorian society trying to find a respectable means of subsistence. Teaching was one of the few options available to a woman who had no family, or family money, to support her. It was not viewed as a noble calling or a desirable alternative to marriage. Governesses were necessary household fixtures in middle or upper-class families with young children. They were expected to carry out their duties efficiently and invisibly. A schoolmistress was one small step above a governess in the social hierarchy, but below a schoolmaster, and was truly considered a "nobody," as Ginevra Fanshawe calls Lucy, by members of the upper classes.

Ginevra is not expressing an isolated or purely personal attitude when she comments that Lucy is a curious anomaly in her world--she is a schoolmistress with a real identity. "'It seems so odd,' she replied, with her usual half-honest, half-insolent unreserve, 'that you and I should now be so much on a level, visiting in the same sphere; having the same connections'" (p. 392). She assumes that there must be some mystery about Lucy's background that will explain why she is accepted by people like M.

de Bassompierre and his daughter, Paulina, and demands to know what it is, and who Lucy *really* is. She is surprised that Lucy does not seem to realize how privileged her position is. "'I wonder you are not more flattered by all this,' she went on: 'you take it with strange composure. If you really are the nobody I once thought you, you must be a cool hand'" (p. 393).

The truth is that Ginevra is right. There is a reason for the Brettons' and the de Bassompierres' perception of Lucy as a person, rather than as a teacher, and it is debatable whether, if they had first met her in her present position, that they would have been able to see past the "nobody"--the teacher--and recognize Lucy, the person underneath. Paulina and her father, Mr. Home, who has since inherited a title and become the Count de Bassompierre, had known Lucy as Mrs. Bretton's goddaughter, when both Lucy and Paulina were staying with the Brettons. When Lucy meets the Homes years later in Villette, she is nervous about telling them what her present situation is, since "They might choose to vary by some shades their hitherto cordial manner towards me, when aware of my grade in society" (p. 367-8).

Lucy sees the Homes' responses to her confession as indications of their exemplary values and charitable natures. Mr. Home "showed himself a true-hearted gentleman" after keeping Lucy in suspense for a few moments: "When he did look at me, his eye was kind; when he did speak, his voice was benevolent. 'Yours,' said he, 'is an arduous calling. I wish you health and strength to win in it--success'" (p. 368). Polly's reaction is equally kind, less self-conscious, and openly curious; her unqualified acceptance of Lucy proves that she is made of much finer stuff than Ginevra Fanshawe.

> His fair little daughter did not take the information quite so composedly: she fixed on me a pair of eyes wide with wonder--almost with dismay.
>
> 'Are you a teacher?' cried she. Then, having paused on the unpalatable idea, 'Well, I never knew what you were, nor

ever thought of asking; for me, you were always Lucy Snowe.'
(p. 368-9)

She asks Lucy if she likes it, and when Lucy says "not always," Paulina and her father both demand to know why she goes on with it. Her answer is simple; "Chiefly, I fear, for the sake of the money I get." This disappoints Mr. Home, who was hoping that she had more idealistic reasons for an obviously unfortunate choice. "'Not then from motives of pure philanthropy? Paulina and I were clinging to that hypothesis, as the most lenient way of accounting for your eccentricity.'" When Lucy denies any higher purpose than to keep a roof over her head, Paulina concludes the exchange by expressing what is very likely Charlotte Bronte's feeling: "'Papa, say what you will, I pity Lucy'" (p. 369).

Lucy continues to teach for Madame Beck, falls in and out of love with Graham Bretton, and falls in love with M. Paul. The fiery, occasionally bad-tempered, but always honest little professor is the only person she comes in contact with that has the insight and the inclination to solve the puzzle of who she is. He coaxes the intense, passionate woman hidden behind the drab, nondescript teacher to reveal herself. Lucy has finally found somebody whom she cannot fool or put off with her icy facade; somebody who knows and loves what she is, not what she seems to be.

M. Paul works vigorously making financial arrangements and taking care of the details of setting up a school for Lucy before he leaves for Guadaloupe, where he must go for three years to oversee a family plantation. He expects to return with enough money so that they can marry and live comfortably. Lucy's future seems at last to promise happiness and peace. She tells us that while he is gone, she works hard, builds up the reputation of her school, and makes it prosper. She confides in us how satisfying this time was for her. "M. Emmanuel was away three years. Reader, they were the three happiest years of my life" (p. 593).

The novel ends, however, with the suggestion that Lucy's hopes for the future will be dashed once again, and that M. Paul may not return. There are terrible storms at sea, and Lucy hears the Banshee for the fifth

time in her life. It is tragic but not surprising to the reader that it does not seem as if things will work out happily for Lucy. She has known, and tells the reader from the beginning, that her life is not ordained by Destiny to be a happy or an easy one. We are left to wonder if this loss will be the stroke that finally fells Lucy, or if she has by this point become sufficiently awakened from her "catalepsy and dead trance" to find in others what she has been missing, and to live with some measure of contentment even if M. Paul is not able to keep his promise to come back to her. The reader can only hope that she meant what she said when referring to an earlier disappointment, and can hang on to her fatalistic resignation, if nothing else.

> But I got over that pain also. Life is still life, whatever its pangs: our eyes and ears and their use remain with us, though the prospect of what pleases be wholly withdrawn, and the sound of what consoles be silenced. (p. 354)

Spinster: Sylvia Ashton-Warner (1958)

In Spinster, Sylvia Ashton-Warner re-creates the events of one tumultuous and pivotal year, from one spring through the following spring, in the life of Anna Vorontosov. Anna is an infant mistress (a teacher of four and five-year old children) in a New Zealand primary school. Anna's story is of interest for several reasons. The first is that although Spinster is a novel, not autobiography, Ashton-Warner was an infant mistress in New Zealand, and without her experiences and perceptions as an insider in the school system, the novel would almost certainly not have been written in its present form. The second is that the novel is concerned almost entirely with Anna's attempts to construct an integrated teacher identity that she can live with. We watch her engage in what becomes, literally, a life or death struggle to come to terms with the forces in her past that have defined who she is, and have pushed her toward the present moment in her life.

Because she narrates her story in the first person and in the present tense, the reader is allowed direct and immediate access to Anna's perceptions and mental processes as she struggles to understand and explain to herself her thoughts, feelings, actions, and motivations. The problems she faces, the decisions she makes, and her emotions and reactions involve the reader in an immediate and urgent way. They are not *faits accomplis*, reflected upon from the distance and the global perspective afforded by the passage of time. This technique generates an impression of spontaneity and honesty. She seems unaware of an audience other than herself, and her story appears unmediated by the intention to sit down, self-consciously and retrospectively, to tell the story she wants told about her life.

In the first few pages, economically and with almost no direct exposition, Anna tells us a great deal about herself, and what she sees as the defining facts about her present life. The first very brief image is of her

comforting a sobbing "Little One." "I sit on my low chair and take him on my knee and tuck his black head beneath my chin. 'There . . . there . . . look at my pretty boy'" (p. 3). We then see her alone at night in her "slim bed," with only a "pillow-worn, finger-worn and tear-worn" photo for company. "I read into it all the expressions I have known; and the attention my spinster heart craves. But memory only loosens the tears" (p. 3).

Abruptly, we shift to Anna leaving her house in the morning on her way to school. She passes through her garden, where the delphiniums remind her of men and love.

> With no trouble at all I break apart into sobbing. What luxury is self-pity! How blessed to weep in the spring!
>
> But you can't get this sort of thing to last and soon there is only sniffing left. And confound it, here's my face to wash and powder again. Also I'd better take some brandy to make my legs go. (p. 4)

This kind of inner dialogue is typical of the way Anna talks to and about herself. However, the apparent artlessness and the unsparing candor of her portrayal of herself becomes increasingly problematic as the book progresses; we become aware that she is continuously and very self-consciously playing to an audience which includes herself as well as those of us who, she is well aware, are watching and listening to her. Her tendency to ignore what she doesn't want to see and to use words to create her own personal reality while pretending to be ruthlessly honest can be seen in Anna's references to her age. She is probably in her late middle age, although she is irritatingly coy about exactly how old she is. The subject comes up repeatedly, and is obviously a sensitive point for her. At various times, she tells us that she is feeling "not a day over my thirty years;" that she is "a normal woman of hardly over thirty years;" and that she has "the desire of a woman in the forties. . . to protect and nurture the young." She speaks of herself in the same paragraph first as a woman of forty-four, and then thirty-four. Finally, when forced to confront her illusions, she admits that she cannot sustain the illusion of youth.

"Temporarily, the glamorous thirties switch to the vague fifties" (p. 49). We do know that it has been "many long virgin years" since her one great love affair failed and she was left heartbroken and that she is very attracted to Paul Vercoe, the new male teacher on staff; but that no matter how tempted they may be to deny it, the difference in their ages makes a romantic relationship out of the question.

We know very little about Anna's life before this particular spring, and what she does tell us is as contradictory and suspect as what she says about her age. The line between reality and sentimental, melodramatic illusion is a hazy one for Anna. She repeatedly mentions Eugene, the man from her past whom she left in Europe, and checks her mailbox daily, hoping for a letter from him that doesn't come. Her references to him are a confusing blend of what she remembers to be true, what she would like to be true, and what she wants the reader to believe at the moment. Eugene was most likely older than Anna, possibly a great deal older. We don't know for sure if they had a physical relationship, or if she refused him because he would not marry her and is still a virgin. She insists that although she did resist him, she is not sure that this was the right decision. "I should have given myself to Eugene, all those years ago, with or without marriage. Fancy mixing up orthodoxy with love!" (p.82) She grieves for the son that she never had with him, but there is a suggestion that the son who inhabits her imagination may have been Eugene's real, illegitimate offspring whom she either aborted or miscarried.

Paul Vercoe has a relationship with Whareparita, a thirteen-year-old student, which results in twin sons who die at birth. After returning from the funeral for the stillborn twins, Anna plays a Brahms piece on her piano, explaining that "It is my own private epitaph for my son that no one need know about" (p. 132). When she finds out that the Maori girl is pregnant, Anna makes it clear that her reaction is not so much sympathy for Whareparita, as it is personal indignation.

> It's just that I am allergic to smug men using women and then cruising off; women from thirteen on. I'm so allergic that I sent

> Eugene cruising off without using me. I never mellow on the matter of men taking their pleasure from women, however noble their ideas of personal freedom, and leaving them to clean up. And this is just what the Whareparita story means to me. Some great hulk, some lofty Eugene, helping himself to a lovely child and bequeathing her the consequences. I hold myself very quiet, as I always do when my temper is involved on a deep level. (p. 113)

We do not know whether her anger is generic and hypothetical, or whether it springs from her first-hand experience of this situation, but Anna's comments can clearly be seen to have some disturbing implications; they raise indirectly one possible explanation for her pain and the constant presence of Guilt in her life.

We also find out--although, as with everything she tells us, not in a clear, linear, or necessarily credible way--that when Anna was very young, her family was forced to make a difficult re-settlement, possibly because of the pogroms in Russia, and that her mother did not survive the trip. Anna's comments to the Head about Paul's decision to quit teaching soon become focused on herself, and she reveals the real source of her emotions. Her anger at Paul's inability to forget about his frustrated dreams and to get on with his teaching are connected to her anger at both of her parents and her complex and ambivalent feelings about the meaning of strength, courage and giving up. Anna is angry at what she has interpreted as her mother's weakness in refusing to hang on and fight, choosing to die instead; at her father's single-minded inability to recognize or make allowances for his wife's fragility; at her own desire to give up; and at the stubborn pride which drives her to persevere.

> "Let the weak fall by the wayside! Many fell by the wayside on the migration to Kazakhstan and the strong went on. My father went on! The Vorontosov does not halt progress for the unequipped.". . .

> All at once I fall into deep crying. I'm just lost in it. I feel the Head patting me helplessly on the shoulder. "My little mother fell by the wayside," I tell him, "but not from lack of courage."
>
> . . . "I want to go to Kazakhstan," I cry harder: my cream smock is drenched with handkerchief duty, "where her little person lies. My father took her on with him in the cart with me." (p. 138)

Her belief that she has no choice but to carry on with teaching in her own way, in spite of official disapproval, seems to spring in large part from what she imagines her father's expectations would be. She needs to prove herself stronger than her mother. At the same time, she can't ignore her wish to stop struggling, and to have somebody to take care of her.

The third important fact about Anna's past--possibly the one thing that we know for sure--is that when she looks back, she sees nothing but failures and mistakes. She has failed at love, and even more painfully, has failed at teaching. She hangs on to her memories of failure as the one certain, stable thing in her life, and uses the repetition of this idea in her mind as a sort of personal and hypnotic mantra.

> As an Infant Mistress I fail. If there's anything new in that. Fail seems to be my nom de plume; Miss Anna Fail. Pretty. I should use it when signing my cheques. . . . yes, as an Infant Mistress, I fail all right. (p. 11).

Each morning, she is so overwhelmed by the memory of past mistakes, and the anxiety they still arouse in her, that she must take a tumbler of brandy before she can face the short walk from her teacherage to her schoolroom.

Anna receives two "gradings" (official statements of her ranking as a teacher) during the course of the year encompassed by the novel. She receives one near the end of the first spring, and one when it is spring again. It is no surprise to her when she receives an "exceedingly low" grading the first time.

> There can be no doubt about it: I'm a very low-ability teacher. For the whole of my teaching life inspectors have

> agreed on that. It's true that I have tried with everything I had in hand, giving far more of my life to my work than many a crack Infant Mistress in town, dancing upward on the grading list, but here it is. Plainly I am mistaken in all I do. The inspectors are right. . . . Face the facts. I'm a poor teacher and all the inspectors to date have proved it. I'm a mass of mistakes, and all of life has proved that. (p. 81-2)

We know at the close of the novel that her second grading comes shortly after a written performance evaluation by the inspector. This suggests that she may have received one just before the beginning of her story, which could account for the renewed life and vigor of Guilt.

Guilt, for her, is a very insistent and corporeal presence. "It is something you find on your shoulders with tight legs clasping your neck. I thought I had forgotten Guilt. I thought he was gone for good, and not merely into hiding for the winter" (p.4). It seems that Guilt is sent to torment her with her inadequacy as a teacher, but that he can only perch on her shoulders when she is outside of her classroom, and the space is not already occupied by a small child. She blames herself for being unable to conform to institutional expectations, and therefore, not making more progress and gaining more recognition in her profession.

> If only I had done all that inspectors had told me in the past- whenever they wanted me to, in the way they wanted me to and for the reason! If only I had been a good teacher, an obedient teacher and submissive! If only I could have remained in the safety of numbers that I knew when I was young! But no, I've always been wrong. (p. 4)

On the surface at least, she accepts past evaluations by inspectors as fair comments on her ineptitude. She admits to feeling ashamed and grieved that she has not been able to win their approval, but repeatedly denies the corrosive anger that is destroying her, and her deep sense of injustice and betrayal at being overlooked and slighted. "The mistake was mine anyway. A good teacher does not break out from the curriculum,

even when it is deficient. A worthy teacher does not defy an order of a Director" (p.187-88). She concludes later that the question is not whether she is a good teacher. "I'm sure I'm not a good teacher. I'm not even an appalling teacher. I'm not a teacher at all. I'm no more than a certified nit-wit let loose among children" (p. 204). On one level, she believes what she is saying, but on another level, she rejects it with an anger so intense that it is too threatening to face.

There are four striking metaphors that both shape and reveal how Anna envisions teaching, her students, and herself as teacher. One is the identification of human life with the rhythms of nature, and the passage of the seasons. Another, inextricably connected and an extension of the first, is of students, teaching, and learning as part of an organic process of growth and development, controlled by natural rather than man-made rhythms. A third is the image of her pre-fab classroom as a dinghy adrift at sea, inaccessible from the mainland, and with only herself and her Little Ones as passengers and crew. A final metaphor which threads throughout the novel is a recurring picture in Anna's head of a volcano with two vents--one for creativity, the other for destructiveness.

The divisions within the novel, which are titled "Spring," "Summer," "Autumn," "Winter," and "Spring Again," and Anna's continual references to the seasons and the various stages of her garden, do much more than organize the chronology of the story. There is a natural rhythm, a cyclical inevitability of repetition with a difference, which she sees as a force organizing events in her life in the short term, as well as the sense that she is experiencing her life as the repetition of these cycles within one larger cycle--her movement through the phases of birth and growth, toward fruition and finally death. The metaphor is so pervasive, and is so integral to Anna's view of life and the world around her, that she would not even recognize it as a metaphor. It has become a permanent and invisible lens through which she views her life.

This awareness that there is a greater force with a plan beyond the scope of our limited understanding, and that as human beings we are not

separate from and cannot control this natural order, very much determine the way that Anna thinks about children, learning, and herself as teacher. Anna says that she feels obliged to organize her teaching day, but that she knows these plans are only temporary and provisional; useful only until "Some other deeper mysterious plan takes over" (p. 28). She cannot anticipate this deeper plan. She can only recognize it after the fact, and wish that she was more accessible to it, because it is so much more reliable than her own poor intelligence. In the meantime, because she is not sufficiently receptive to its messages, she carries on making her own plans, realizing that their purpose is to provide an interim structure.

> Yet I still plan in my wan way. I find some element of security in seeing ahead of me a definite arrangement. It's a framework that amounts to a spacious shelter, and even though little eventuates that I have thought out first, I still do it. And as fast as my deliberations come to no fruition I make them again, while, to the extent that they fail, I sense this other inexorable direction in my life; so that although I am chained to a memory I am sometimes struck by the triviality of it, and feel that any affair of the heart has nothing to do with the ultimate destination. And that I am as clay in the hands of this force, this something that told my delphiniums when to bud, this will that is frighteningly present in my infant room, deeply at large beneath the lid of orthodoxy and discipline, that breathes up through the cracks in moments of outburst. I sense this other intention and am afraid to touch it. (p. 28)

She needs the courage to stop resisting this force and simply allow learning to happen, rather than trying to impose it.

One of the things that points most clearly to the fact that learning in the traditional school environment does not draw on the natural desires and interests of children is the fact that given the choice, they will too often choose to do something else. She is ashamed when she notices how anxious the restless children are to run away when the bell goes. "At last

our lord the bell rings, freeing all the other little prisoners. I feel ashamed that my little ones are dying to go outside. Why this prepossession to go outside? Why not the prepossession to come inside?" (p. 53) At this point, she is still teaching reading with imported reading books, and nominally using the assigned workbooks. She has struggled for a long time, however, with the need to be more open to the design of this other intention. She recognizes this design as "An organic design. A growing living changing design. The normal and healthful design. Unsentimental and merciless and shockingly beautiful" (p. 41). The vision of what this would look like seems to be revealed to her, not something that she deliberately constructs.

> The image that jostles forward and upward demanding my inner eye is one of an infant room that has achieved the organic order; a seed-bed where children grow and expand and bloom, where there is an end to don'ts and bells and where the Old Man of Guilt no longer dominates my being. It's a noisy, happy place with much free coming and going through the door. Children dance spontaneously like leaves in the wind and learning is a matter of preference. (p. 42-3)

She would like to be able to follow the advice of the inspectors and teach conventionally, dutifully and correctly, but she is pushed by the will of a greater power, and the choice is not really hers.

Another image that controls the way Anna thinks about her classroom is of her pre-fab as a small boat adrift at sea. Sometimes, "the infant room rocks along like a dinghy in a storm" (p. 51); sometimes, "the little dinghy riding the high waves of the ocean runs into some benign weather" (p. 53). Always, she feels isolated, vulnerable, and self-contained. This disconnection from the mainland, or mainstream society, creates an intimacy and a mutuality of purpose among the "fifty or sixty souls of varied kinds and sires bundled together in my precarious dinghy on the tumultuous seas, and all encompassed in me" that would not exist elsewhere (p. 58). She has only the five-year-old occupants of the dinghy to answer to, and she alone is responsible for their well-being. The appearance of

the rare visitor in her dinghy is always occasion for discomfort, as she is forced to recall that her little boat is not as immune to the influence of the outside world as she imagines. The presence of Inspector Abercrombie, and her students' spontaneous and extroverted reaction to his presence, threatens its equilibrium, and Anna's safety. "I've had enough. All my mistakes as a teacher and all my professional sins rise like a tidal wave over my head. The dinghy has struck bad weather" (p. 100).

Although she doesn't tell us how she came to choose teaching as a career, the metaphor of her pre-fab as a dinghy encompasses within it many of the attractions of teaching for Anna, and also the main reason that she finds it so difficult. The house she lives in is quiet and hollow, but at the same time full; "Full to the top with emptiness it is; full of a waiting past" (p. 27). The pre-fab, on the other hand, is filled with living, breathing children and the present. "The thing about teaching is that while you are doing it no yesterday has a chance" (p. 7). It is exhausting, but life in the pre-fab drives away everything except the children and the present moment, and temporarily makes her forget her loneliness, fear, and shame. "No other job in the world could possibly dispossess one so completely as this job of teaching. It cuts right into your being: essentially, it takes over your spirit. It drags it out from where it would hide" (p. 9).

She is confused about why she needs a glass of brandy to get her to her pre-fab, since she knows that once she is there, the rest of the world will recede, along with her problems and insecurities. "Why waste a half-tumbler of brandy in the morning in order to lose the past when you lose it among the Little Ones anyway? Is this drinking necessary? After all I have only to cross the paddock through the trees and here I am saved" (p. 7-8). In the classroom, she becomes another person.

> It is the last hour in the afternoon and the flowers and tears and brandy of the morning are long since left behind. I've completely forgotten all that. I've mislaid who I am. Sensuously and accurately I vibrate and respond to the multifold touch of my

> Little Ones. . . . I am made of their thoughts and their feeling. I am composed of sixty-odd different pieces of personality. (p. 22)

Teaching is consuming and exhilarating; her mind and her nerves become more exposed and sensitive to sensations in the present, and at the same time insulated from everything else, including her obsession with men.

> No provocation from men may follow me here. I forget all about the young teacher fighting away with his children over there in the big school, and my unexplainable feelings about him, when I am teaching. Never do I hear again, or feel again, in here among the children, the voice and the hand of the Reverend as I do over a meal in my house. I don't even recall Eugene. (p. 40)

When she is left alone with her children, teaching is a refuge from memories and pain, and a substitute for the life, the love, and the children she would really like to have. Her protestations that her work is as satisfying and as creative as having children of her own and a man to look after her are not convincing in light of her obvious and deep sadness, and her obsessive feelings that she has been horribly cheated by life.

The fact that being a teacher dispossesses Anna so completely is a solution to some of her problems, but is also a problem in itself. It is always disorienting, but particularly so on Monday mornings, to make the transition from her quiet, ordered home life to the noisy, chaotic world of her pre-fab schoolroom and forty demanding children. "Really, it's confusing, this overlapping of two worlds" (p. 8). She asks herself the question; "To what world do I really belong? The intoxicating one of paint and music, memory and wine, or to this jagged edged one of rough reality?" and then admits that she knows the answer: "Something tells me that this stormy pre-fab is the real and the right and the safe half of my world" (p. 10). She wishes for some higher force that would unite the separate parts of herself: "Ah, if only one love controlled the whole! . . . I'm tired of being a cheap flirt to Paul, an eccentric to the Head, a refusal to Eugene, a failure to the Inspector and an artist unto God." She longs for "one vast rain to encompass my all. To embrace my all." (p. 59) It is characteristic that in

this catalogue, Anna has included only the parts of herself that she leaves behind her when she is teaching, and entirely forgets to mention the split that is really causing her difficulty.

Anna creates the image of a volcano to help her to make sense of the energy she feels in her classroom. She begins to formulate the image early in the new school year that we follow her through: "In the world behind my eyes I see a hazy picture of a volcano with two vents: one is creativeness and one is destructiveness" (p. 12). Sensing that it means something, she gently puts the image on a lower shelf of her mind, while she struggles along trying to teach reading from the foreign reading books. It develops by itself, acquiring detail, color, and clarity, until she is able to visualize and articulate it more fully.

> What a dangerous activity reading is; teaching is. All this plastering on of foreign stuff. Why plaster it on at all when there's so much inside already? So much locked in? If only I could get it out and use it as working material. And not draw it out either. If I had a light enough touch it would just come out under its own volcanic power. And psychic power, I read in bed this morning, is greater than any other power in the world. What an exciting and frightening business it would be: even that which squeezes through now is amazing enough. In the safety of the world behind my eyes, where the inspector shade cannot see, I picture the infant room as one widening crater, loud with the sound of erupting creativity. (p. 40-41)

She follows this notion of somehow using and drawing on the highly charged emotional energy associated with the children's own language and affective associations with words, and eventually builds an entire system of teaching reading around the notion of tapping into and releasing these underground sources of energy.

Anna's teaching career has been defined by the tension between her need to do and be what her intuition (my shorthand for the "other intention" she talks about) tells her is right for the children she is with

every day, and her need to be recognized as a competent and efficient teacher according to institutional standards. The glass of brandy she takes in the morning eases this tension, but only temporarily.

> Once it has fired my stomach and arteries I don't feel Guilt. It supplies me with a top layer to my mind so that I meet my fifty Maori infants as people rather than as the origin of the Inspector's displeasure; and whereas I am so often concerned on this account with the worst in children, I now see only the best. (p. 8)

Sometimes, when she and her students are alone in her classroom, and she can ignore Guilt and the imaginary presence of an inspector hiding in the rafters, Anna feels confident about what she is doing. In one such moment, when her vision of the infant room as it should be is particularly compelling, she burns her workbooks, and vows that she will no longer allow her fear of the consequences to stop her from trying to make her dream a reality. "Never, never, never, again will I accept this finer form of the many tortures of orthodox teaching" (p. 78). She believes that she understands children, and that she knows how they learn and what they need better than most of the "crack infant mistresses" who follow the orthodox methods so well, and are "dancing upward on the grading list' (p. 81). The picture of a thriving, organic infant room that she sees behind her eyes makes her believe that she is right to encourage her students to communicate freely with her and with each other; to let them laugh, sing, cry, push, fight, and caress; to tell them stories and let them paint, sculpt, write stories, dance, and make music on her piano. She spends much of her free time writing and illustrating books to teach them to read, based on stories and pictures from their world. Most importantly, she is never without a small child in her arms or on her lap. She uses physical contact to establish a connection that calms fear and soothes pain, making a frightened, angry or tearful child feel safe, protected, and loved. She watches children closely, learns from them, and nurtures them as complex physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual little beings. When

she is with them, there is no question of being able to deny their individuality, and teach as if they were one homogeneous entity, according to the rules of the system.

The things that she does well, and would like to have her work judged on, however, are not included in the criteria that inspectors have based their evaluations on. Outside of the classroom, or when she thinks about how others perceive her work, Anna thinks about her teaching career as a series of mistakes, wrong choices, and resolutions to change.

> Yet it can't be too late. True, the mistakes have all been mine, but this is the ground I'll build on. Plainly the inspectors are all good men and all I need to do is co-operate. What could be easier or more profitable? Slowly I will recover my lagging professional status and prove myself a thoroughly useful force in the service. Then maybe this old man Guilt will release my throat and I'll be one with others at last. (p. 5)

She makes promises to herself--ones she knows she will not keep as she is making them--about limiting her work to the prescribed curriculum; keeping attendance records neat, accurate, and up-to-date; insisting that students do their workbook exercises; demanding silence, order, and obedience; and generally conforming in ways that will buy her good evaluations and move her up the teaching hierarchy financially and professionally.

This conflict is externalized in Anna's conversations with her flowers. When she receives a low grading the first time, the delphiniums argue with her conclusion that she is entirely wrong, and the inspectors right. "It's a disgrace, Anna, I hear, to be considered a good teacher. It is a distinction to be marked low. 'All rogues walk alone'" (p. 81). Their sympathy sounds hollow and mocking, however. Anna tells the dahlias that the thing to do is to ignore the delphiniums, listen to her common sense instead, and face the fact that she has been wrong.

Instead of feeling proud of her integrity, and the courage required to put the needs of children ahead of institutional constraints, she feels

ostracized and even victimized by her passionate need to do things differently. When the new Inspector visits her room, she is horrified by what she imagines he must be thinking.

> Then suddenly and harshly I remember that no less than Mr. W. W. J. Abercrombie, Senior Inspector of Primary Schools, is sitting beside me. What a way for a teacher to be caught! Sitting on a low chair holding a child like a woman! Why aren't I standing at the blackboard like other teachers with a pointer, telling the children to be quiet and to listen to me? Why aren't I raising my voice above the room in authority? Ah, what a din in here! There are Waiwini and Wiki dancing on the tables to the piano music of Hori, come to practice. What a characteristic failure I am! Ah, Guilt, you are killing me! (p. 102)

She has not found a way to reconcile these two conflicting visions of herself as teacher. They both meet different but equally strong needs, she has invested heavily in both, and therefore is not able to reject either. Instead, she vacillates, sometimes wildly, between the two.

> A picture I am seeing increasingly is myself in the age of oldness, shuddering in my wheelchair, to think that I had done nothing with these five hours a day. Then I see myself being sacked because I do. Then I see the instincts in the raw in my infant room and the beauty of organic growth, and repeatedly I see the agony of minds expanding under pressure. And I see the wilderness of the *pa* and my bad name in the inspectorate; indeed, possibly, even in the Directorate. They interchange and interweave, the pictures, and I see brown and blue and black eyes peering out from beneath a heavy lid of respectability and tradition like the eyes of prisoners in a dungeon. (p. 61)

Her attempts to incorporate into her teacher identity the characteristics of both her internal vision and the authorized public definition of a good teacher causes her to feel increasingly dislocated and alienated.

Unlike some of the other teachers in the novels I have looked at who discount authority figures and treat the system with varying degrees of contempt, Anna cares very much what her superiors think. She likes and respects the Head of the school, Mr. Reardon, who doesn't interfere with her teaching or try to change her, worries about her, and takes care of her attendance rolls for her. She would like to be the kind of teacher who would enhance the reputation of his school. She has feared previous inspectors, but has still tried very hard to earn a favorable opinion.

The new Senior Inspector, Mr. Abercrombie, is very different from inspectors Anna has had experience with, and she finds her fear and guilt dissipating as he listens to her with genuine respect and interest.

> He is remarkably quiet and unassuming for an Inspector, especially a Senior. I can't make it out. Indeed, so open does he leave the field that I am constrained, uncontrollably, to talk myself. And, outrageously, that is what I do." (p. 101)

She finds herself first confessing that she has burned her workbooks, and then explaining her theories and methods of teaching reading. She shows him her painstakingly hand printed, illustrated, and bound books. He listens carefully and looks at the readers she has made, first with curiosity, and then enthusiasm. She is pleased, flattered, and excited when he finds her a large-print typewriter to make her work easier, and brings visitors to the pre-fab to watch her teach and listen to her ideas.

Anna's outlook changes dramatically at this point. She throws herself into her work with more enthusiasm than ever, and no longer has to rely on brandy to get her to school in the morning, "For the frightening inspector shade in the rafters, limiting and aborting all I do, has materialized into a figure of goodwill" (p. 171). She convinces herself that Mr. Abercrombie's kindness is not just an expression of professional courtesy, and she begins to have a secret vision of herself as the "coming Infant Mistress of New Zealand," recognized and respected for her original ideas. "I am that now; in my own view. It's only a matter of time. . . . I'll be

recognized for what I am. I might even be invited to lecture at the Teacher's Training College on Maori Infant Method" (p. 219-20).

Unfortunately, Anna sees no middle ground between what is expected of an exemplary infant mistress, and what she is willing and able to do; and between being either an absolute failure, or an absolute success. Her unrealistic view of herself and her inabilty to compromise leave her with very few options. Mr. Abercrombie is warm and encouraging. He tells her how refreshing it is to find someone really thinking, that he sees the value in her Maori reading books, and that he enjoys the vitality and the warm atmosphere of her classroom. He tells her that he thinks she is a wonderful teacher, and says so in a positive evaluation letter. When an official decision is made on her grading, however, it appears that other factors have been taken into consideration, such as an "ugly rigmarole" in Anna'a past involving the Director of Schools and an Art Scheme for Maori schools developed by Anna which ended up being burned. Mr. Abercrombie invites the Director to visit Anna's classroom, but he declines. Anna has also been ignoring some of the required subjects, and using the time to concentrate on reading. This adds up to a picture of a teacher with many positive qualities, but who is too unconventional to fit the authorized definition of a good teacher. In her rational mind, Anna knows that receiving a mediocre grade is not the same thing as failing as a teacher, but her heart, lungs and stomach tell her that it is.

After she receives the first disastrous grading in the Spring, Anna gives herself one last chance. Mr. Abercrombie makes her believe that things might be different. She allows herself to hope, not only that she will be recognized as a good teacher at last, but that she has found the great love she has been looking for. It seems to her that she may at last be due for some of the happiness and success she has been denied, personally and professionally. When she receives the letter saying that there has been no increase in her grading, the foundation of her new optimism falls out from underneath her, and she feels as if once more she has nothing to hold onto.

She has run out of the strength and courage she needs to face this repeating cycle of hope and disappointment.

Although it is not spelled out clearly, when she decides to settle her affairs, send in her resignation, and go on an ocean voyage on a big ship with an unspecified destination, the reader is fairly certain of her intent to commit suicide. The idea has been firmly planted that she does not have the courage to face another disappointment. Early in the book, she asks herself whether her supply of courage is something that will eventually run out, or if it is a substance that divides organically, constantly renewing itself. "If I could only be sure that it would, I would plunge right in and lift the lid from the infant room. Then the stillness of age and its regrets would no longer be something to take my life in advance about" (p. 61). She suggests that if Paul ever did decide to invest everything in one final attempt to talk to the world, and failed, that the result would be inevitable. "He'd just pick up a gun like any other wise young failure and complete the end of himself. It would be the right and brave thing to do when one's ill is 'not for mending'" (p. 130). It seems that Anna's ill is not for mending, and that the demands she makes on herself finally leave her totally exhausted and depleted.

The final image sums up poignantly Anna's deep inner conflict between seeing herself as a grown up woman and a teacher, and as a lonely, hurting child, badly in need of somebody to look after her. Whether we understand her escape literally, as a journey in a big ship back to Europe and Eugene, or as her final journey to a more peaceful and much kinder place, there is no misunderstanding the finality of Anna's actions at this point, or her relief at finally giving herself up entirely to a man who can give her the care and attention she so desperately needs, whether the man is her idea of god, her father, Eugene, or an amalgam of all the men she has ever known and imagined.

"What is it, what is it, Little One?"

A big man, ugly enough without the heavy hornrimmed glasses, kneels to my level and tips my chin. Tears break away and set off down my face.

That's why somebodies they tread my sore leg for notheen: somebodies.

He sits on a low chair, in his study, takes me on his knee and tucks my black head beneath his chin. Outside the snow falling on "a city in the twilight, dim and vast". . .

"There . . . there . . . look at my pretty girl . . ." (p. 242)

The Centaur: John Updike (1963)

The Centaur is a beautifully crafted, absorbing, and satisfying novel. Updike expertly intertwines the stories of ancient mythological characters with the apparently quite ordinary American lives of fifteen-year-old Peter Caldwell and his father George, a high-school teacher, in 1947. The novel is on one level a very realistic story of the complicated relationships between members of a small family who love each other deeply but not simply, and George's apparently unexceptional life as an unhappy, struggling teacher. At the same time it is a surrealistic view of their lives from another perspective, possibly madness, hallucination or dream on either George's or Peter's part. The point of view shifts from that of a third person narrator speaking in the present tense, to Peter's account, from an adult perspective, in the first person and the past tense .

The pain, disillusionment, and death of Chiron, the gentle Centaur and teacher of demi-gods and heroes, are indistinguishable from George's. In the epigraph, Updike quotes from Josephine Peabody's version of the story of Chiron, the noblest of all the Centaurs, who is in perpetual pain from a wound caused by a poisoned arrow, and his desire to escape his suffering by offering his immortality in exchange for Prometheus' pardon.

> Ever tormented with the hurt and never to be healed, the immortal Centaur longed for death, and begged that he might be accepted as an atonement for Prometheus. The Gods heard his prayer and took away his pain and his immortality. He died like any wearied man, and Zeus set him as a shining archer among the stars. (epigraph)

The two levels of reality operate in counterpoint throughout the novel. Updike conflates and layers identities, experiences, and associations. He introduces logically impossible inconsistencies and ambiguities and demands that the reader make huge imaginative leaps with him. Many

sequences are impossible to understand literally. The novel evokes in me the same feeling as those half-waking moments when we struggle to decide what is dream and what is reality--those moments in which we have a hazy awareness that maybe the comfortable separation isn't as clear as we usually believe. The speed with which contradictions and impossibilities are introduced and the shape-shifting nature of the "reality" of events requires a close and attentive reading, but they also allow for an openness and richness that compensate for the effort required.

The story opens as Chiron, the wise and gentle centaur and teacher of demi-gods and heroes, limps in fear and pain from a classroom of "leering, baying" students, one of whom has shot him in the ankle with an arrow, possibly poisoned. As he makes his escape, "His top half felt all afloat in a starry firmament of ideals and young voices singing; the rest of his self was heavily sunk in a swamp where it must, eventually, drown" (p. 4). This elevation of spirituality and idealism--the unlimited possibilities for beauty and goodness of the human brain and heart--and contempt for the rootedness of the human body in an unlovely animal reality, with its attendant limitations and inevitable pain, is the controlling metaphor for George's image of himself. Chiron's panicky, claustrophobic dash for freedom, hampered by his throbbing leg, indicates how frightened and trapped George feels.

> He tried to keep that leg from touching the floor, but the jagged clatter of the three remaining hooves sounded so loud he was afraid one of the doors would snap open and another teacher emerge to bar his way. In this crisis his fellow-teachers seemed herdsmen of terror, threatening to squeeze him back into the room with the students. (p.5)

He reacts with disgust when he involuntarily empties his bowels on the floor as he is making his escape from the building.

Chiron makes his way laboriously to an adjoining garage owned by Al Hummel, a friend and mechanic. Hummel is introduced in terms that strongly suggest Hephæstus, the lame god, skilled artisan, and jealous

husband of unfaithful Aphrodite. With wire cutters, an acetylene torch, and pliers, he matter-of-factly removes the arrow from what has now become George's very ordinary human leg. Hummel sniffs the arrowhead before handing it to George. When George asks him why, Hummel says that he was wondering if it was poisoned. Although he has already assumed the same thing, George perversely protests that he doesn't think his students would do that. Hummel urges George to approach Zimmerman, the principal of Olinger High School, and to complain. "'A teacher in our public school system shouldn't have to put up with crap like this. . . . A teacher ought to be protected from kids like that. Tell Zimmerman.'" George's non-committal response indicates his resignation, and his view that to ask for the principal's intervention would be futile. "'He's helpless, Al. The kids today just aren't the old kind; Zimmerman *wants* 'em to chew us up'" (p.17).

George's main concern as he heads back to the school with blood from the wound seeping into his shoe is that Zimmerman will have noticed that his class has been left unattended. His fear proves justified, and he returns to his classroom to face both the taunts and jeers of his students, and the sarcasm and ridicule of the principal, who sadistically encourages the students to humiliate their teacher, and informs George that his negligence will be duly recorded. George desperately tries to explain.

> Caldwell groped and felt behind him the cold sleek arrowshaft jutting from his pocket. He took it out and offered it to Zimmerman while he struggled to find the first words of his story, a story that once known, would make Zimmerman embrace him for his heroic suffering; tears of compassion would fall from that imperious distended face. (p. 33)

The principal peremptorily cuts off George's attempt to tell his story, and orders the badly unnerved teacher to carry on with his class, while he sits at the back and observes.

George launches into a lesson intended to help students form some conception of the beginnings and the age of the Universe. As either he or Peter perceive it, or remember it, or envision it in a nightmare, Caldwell's

lesson goes from bad to worse. It takes on the quality of a bad LSD trip. "A paper airplane shot into the air, wobbled, and sharply fell; it struck the floor of the middle aisle and became an open-faced white flower whose baby-like yowling continued throughout the remainder of the class" (p. 41). A student throws the contents of a paper grocery bag, a clot of living trilobites, on the floor. They add to the rumpus as students run from them, chase them, drop books on them, and eat them. "One of the girls, a huge purple parrot feathered with mud, swiftly ducked her head and plucked a small one up. Its little biramous legs fluttered in upside-down protest. She crunched it in her painted beak and methodically chewed" (p. 42). At the height of the debacle, Zimmerman is openly fondling a young female student who has removed her bra, another couple is involved in serious sexual foreplay, and several students are rolling around on the floor wrestling and stabbing each other with pencils. Caldwell finally loses any semblance of control, and out of desperation and fear, he picks up the arrow shaft from his desk and whips a student across the bare back with it, drawing blood.

In the next section of the novel, we see the story from Peter's point of view, narrated in the past tense. George becomes an ordinary, mortal human, and an extraordinarily sensitive and worried man. Peter is a teenager who loves his father, but is always slightly embarrassed by him. He wishes that George were not so diffident and ineffectual, that he would demand more respect and be more assertive. George is an intelligent man, a loving husband and father, and a caring teacher who begs everybody he knows to walk all over him, and to agree with him that his life has been a failure and a waste. He needs to carry on his shoulders the weight of everything that has ever gone wrong in his own life, and almost everything that has ever gone wrong in anybody else's. This propensity finds its ultimate expression when he blames himself for the pain caused by his dentist's clumsiness and impatience. "Caldwell recognizes the pain branching in his head as a consequence of some failing in his own teaching, a failure somewhere to inculcate in this struggling soul

consideration and patience; and accepts it as such" (p. 217). His meek, self-effacing manner and his constant reiteration that he has never done anything right irritate and hurt his son. Peter repeats a conversation that he overhears between his parents which reveals George's conviction that he is seriously ill, and explains that his father's self-flagellation is at its worst after a school holiday.

> It was January and Monday. I began to understand. After every weekend, my father had to gather his nerve to go back to teaching. During the Christmas vacation he became slack and in a fury of screw-turning had to retighten himself. "The long haul," he called the stretch between Christmas and Easter. Last week, the first week of the new year, something had happened that had frightened him. He had struck a boy with Zimmerman in the room: he had told us that much. (p. 48)

Saying good-bye to his wife as he and Peter leave for school that same morning, George mixes metaphors of school as a place of killing, and his students' hate as having a tangible form and the physical effect of a creeping, insidious disease. "Off to the slaughterhouse. Those damn kids have put their hate right into my bowels" (p. 68)

Later on, during their ride together to the high school in Olinger, George picks up a hitchhiking tramp and strikes up a very personal conversation which mortifies Peter. George tells the stranger how much he admires his independence and freedom, and how disappointed he is that he has never travelled himself, or done any of the things he wanted to.

> "I wanted to be a druggist," my father told him. "But when I got out of college there was no do-re-mi. My old man left us a bible and a deskful of debts. But I don't blame him, the poor devil tried to do what was right. Some of my kids--I'm a schoolteacher--go off to pharmaceutical school and from what they tell me I just wouldn't have had enough brains for it. A druggist is an intelligent man." (p. 89)

He finds it easy to invest people that he doesn't even know with all of the qualities that he feels are so glaringly deficient in himself.

Once they drop the hitchhiker off, Peter scolds his father for disclosing so many secrets. George defends himself by explaining that nothing he says has any significance, because to his students, he has no material substance. "That's one thing you learn in teaching; people forget everything you tell 'em. I look at those dumb blank faces every day and it reminds me of death. You fall through those kids' heads without a trace" (p. 93). Not only does he believe he is dying, but he believes that since his presence has not been seen, heard, or felt, that his absence will have no effect on the world he will leave behind.

The story alternates between George as Chiron, the centaur, and George the very human man. Both are in a great deal of psychological and physical pain. However, in a third short section of the novel, we see Chiron interacting with his students in a manner which is strikingly different from the scene in George's classroom. As he approaches the clearing in the forest where his students are waiting for him, Chiron joyfully hears his name being called.

> He came into the clearing and his students were already there: Jason, Achilles, Asclepios, his daughter Ocyrhoe, and the other dozen princely children of Olympus abandoned to his care. It had been their voices. Seated in a semi-circle on the warm orchard grass, all hailed him gladly. (p. 95)

The narrator presents Chiron's thoughts as he briefly describes and assesses each of his students. We sense his warm personal interest in them, and his connection with each of them. "In the chorus of greeting, each child's cry was an individual tint known to him. In sum the polyphony formed a rainbow. His eyes wavered on the warm edge of tears" (p. 96). As he gets his students settled for their lesson, Chiron's satisfaction is a poignant reminder of George's bitter disillusionment.

> Chiron inhaled; air like honey expanded the spaces of his chest, his students completed the centaur. They fleshed his wisdom with

> expectation. The wintry chaos of information within him, elicited into sunlight, was struck through with the young colors of optimism. Winter turned vernal. "Our subject today," he began, and the faces, scattered in the deep green shade like petals after rain, were unanimously hushed and attentive. (p. 98-9)

The atmosphere shown in this scene is remarkably different from the hostility and antagonism revealed in George's comments, and in the portrayal of events in his classroom. It is also in some ways remarkably similar. Both have the same very idealized conception of teacher as embodying love, understanding, patience, wisdom, and knowledge in infinite quantities. The job of teacher is to be perfect and complete, and to give endlessly to students from this bottomless supply of inner resources. George is embittered and disappointed by his inability to live up to these impossible expectations, while Chiron, who is the offspring of a god, has the wisdom of his immortal years, and has heroes and demi-gods for students, is equal to the task, and consequently satisfied.

Peter's perception of his father's relationship with his students causes us to question George's unrelentingly harsh judgements of himself. He claims that his existence is irrelevant to his students, feels inadequate to meet their needs, and is too vulnerable to admit to himself the obvious fact that he cares about them very much; while the reader is shown proof that he is accessible to students, brutally honest with them, painfully concerned with their well-being, and determined to do whatever it takes to help them to make more of their lives than he has of his own. His response to a student's question about what the point is of studying extinct animals shows the extent of his involvement and identification with them, his empathy, and the seriousness with which he attends to their needs. He is battling for their lives as much as his own, however oblique, misdirected, or even ridiculous the explicit content of his communications might be.

> "There is no point," my father said. "you are two hundred per cent right: who cares about dead animals? If they're dead, let 'em lie; that's my motto. They depress the hell out of me. But that's

what they give me to teach and I'm going to teach it to you until it kills me. It's either you or me, Deifendorf, and if you don't get rid of those jitters I'll do my best to kill you before you kill me; I'll strangle you with my bare hands if I have to. I'm up here fighting for my life. I have a wife and a kid and an old man to feed. I'm just like you are; I'd rather be out walking the streets. I feel sorry for you; I know how you're suffering." (p. 100)

He cares for his students, and he does reach them, whether or not he is able to recognize this. A diatribe about the futility and degradation of teaching convinces nobody, even himself. Underneath the expressed cynicism and bitterness of George's remarks to Diefendorf, we can detect a skepticism toward his own stated position that belies his words.

School is where you go between when your parents can't take you and industry can't take you. I am a paid keeper of society's unusables--the lame, the halt, the insane, and the ignorant. The only incentive I can give you, kid, to behave yourself is this: if you don't buckle down and learn something, you'll be as dumb as I am, and you'll have to teach to earn a living. . . . I don't wish it on you, kid. Even though you're my worst enemy I don't wish it on you." (p. 102)

Peter directly addresses an unnamed listener, a woman, and tells her and the reader about a chance meeting with Diefendorf, fourteen years later. He finds out that George's former student is now a teacher, and that Peter's father figured prominently in that decision.

"Pete, I often think of what your dad used to tell me about teaching. 'It's rough' he'd say, 'but you can't beat it for the satisfaction you get.' Now I'm teaching myself, I see what he meant. A great man, your Dad. Did you know that?" (p. 103)

George is convinced that the pain in his stomach and bowels is cancer, but that in some mysterious way it is also a physical manifestation of the poisonous hatred directed toward him by his students. "The damn kids. I've caught their damn hate and I feel it like a spider in my big

intestine" (p. 48). Peter's explanation for his father's illness also imputes the cause to George's students, but in a very different way. "My father looked sallow and nauseated, his temples glazed and hollow; . . . Diefendorf had stolen his strength; teaching was sapping him" (p. 103).

George's fear of his principal is a powerful factor contributing to his illness and his despair. Zimmerman's visitation report, written after the disastrous lesson described in the first chapter, is unflattering and critical of George's behavior in many ways, but also honestly acknowledges some of the teaching skills he demonstrates. Peter reads it, and tries to tell his father that it isn't all bad, but George will not accept it as anything other than well-deserved and unmitigated condemnation--the confirmation of his own worst paranoic fears. "'It couldn't be worse," he said, striding down the aisle with the windowpole. "It's murder. And I deserve it. Fifteen years of teaching, and it's all right there. Fifteen years of hell.'" (p. 111) He is convinced that the principal now has the evidence he has been waiting for to have him fired, and that some members of the school board would be glad to get their hands on the report, since, according to him, he has only one friend and three enemies on the board.

At this point, he is expressing the helplessness, frustration, and deep sense of injustice of teachers everywhere at being so vulnerable to the political pressures and the authoritative power of the discourse of official documents, and the adamant and unanswerable nature of evaluation reports. In George, however, this natural frustration becomes pervasive and all-consuming. Peter is frightened by what he sees as his father's increasing loss of perspective. "His talk was unreeling wider and wider; I felt chilled" (p.116).

George makes an appointment to see his doctor after school. He has arranged for Peter to meet him at Doc Appleton's office, so Peter overhears, and later becomes involved in, parts of the conversation between George and the doctor. The first thing he hears as he enters the outer office is his father's voice asking "Could it be hydra venom?" (p.125) The doctor has heard Peter come in, and ignores the question as he greets Peter. He orders

some tests and X-rays, but tells George that his interim diagnosis is that he is suffering from a nervous stomach as a result of being too hard on himself.

> "Your trouble, George," he said "is you have never come to terms with your own body.". . . "You see, George," he said, "you believe in the soul. You believe your body is like a horse you get up on and ride for a while and then get off. You ride your body too hard. You show it no love. This is not natural. This builds up nervous tension." (p. 129)

The truth of his observations, and the layers of irony in his comments, reverberate throughout the text.

Doc Appleton asks Peter if his father enjoys teaching, and Peter has to admit that he doesn't believe so. George quickly interjects that he would if he thought he could be any good at it, "But I don't have the gift of discipline" (p. 130). His assumption that being competent and respected as a teacher is a gift, not something that is earned, or that a person can become better at with patience, work, and learning, is probably one of the most important beliefs contributing to George's despair. He has no faith that there is anything that he can do that will change the utter futility of his situation. There would be some point in struggling, if it could make difference: "'I wouldn't mind plugging ahead at something I wasn't any good at," my father said, "if I knew what the hell the point of it all was. I ask, and nobody'll tell me'" (p. 131). This question about what the point is comes up several times, both from George and from his students. His answer is always that there is no point--to learning, to teaching, to existence itself--for him, because nothing that he does matters or changes anything.

Peter feels very clearly that his father has already begun the process of psychologically removing himself from his long battle with life. Their car (a second-hand black hearse) breaks down, and father and son are forced to spend the night in a hotel in Olinger. The next morning at the school, as they part to go their separate ways for the day, Peter watches

his father walk away. "Smaller and smaller he grew along their perspective; at the far door he became a shadow, a moth, impaled on the light he pressed against. The door yielded; he disappeared. With a grip of sweat, terror seized me" (p. 170). He knows that George has removed himself spiritually, if not yet in body, to a place where his son can't follow or reach him.

At this point in the story, although George is presumably still very much alive, Updike inserts what appears to be George's obituary from the local newspaper. It does not explicitly state that he is dead, or mention anything about the cause of death or a funeral service, but it does say in the last paragraph that he is survived by his sister, father-in-law, wife, and son. The irony and the sadness of the article come from hearing the story of George's life as told by somebody other than George. The writer of the article doesn't add any important new information to what the reader already knows, but the image of the man that emerges bears very little resemblance to the picture in George's mind's eye. The contrast between the way in which the writer presents George's decison to be a teacher rather than a pharmacist, and George's own earlier version of the story, is one example of this difference, and a powerful reminder that there is nothing inherent in a set of circumstances that determines how it will be felt or understood by an individual.

> Following his father's intellectual bent, he showed an early interest in formal science, though in later years he claimed, with the joking modesty so intrinsic to the man, that the height of his ambition was to become a druggist. Fortunately for a generation of Olinger students, Fate decreed otherwise. (p. 172)

The article also puts an entirely different cast on George's competence as a teacher. It contains the conventional flowery praise, and pays the required flattering tribute to his life, that a formal obituary demands. Even bearing in mind, however, that people will focus only on the positive aspects of a person's life in such a context, we have no reason to believe that what the writer says is false or even greatly exaggerated. It

simply presents a very different way of understanding and evaluating what have been shown to be some of the facts of George's life and his teaching, as we can see in the following excerpt.

> How to express the quality of his teaching? A thorough mastery of his subjects, an inexhaustible sympathy for the scholastic underdog, a unique ability to make unexpected connections and to mix in an always fresh and eye-opening way the stuff of life, an effortless humor, a by no means negligible gift for dramatization, a restless and doubting temperament that urged him forward ceaselessly toward self-improvement in the pedagogic craft--these are only parts of the whole. What endures, perhaps most indelibly in the minds of his ex-students (of whom this present writer counts himself one) was his more than human selflessness, a total concern for the world at large which left him, perhaps, too little margin for self-indulgence and satisfied repose. To sit under Mr. Caldwell was to lift up one's head in aspiration. Though there was sometimes--so strenuous and unpatterned was his involvement with his class--confusion, there was never any confusion that indeed "Here was a man." (p. 174)

In these remarks, we can see both how much, and how painfully little, the writer knows about George. The facts of his birth, childhood, major life choices, and his contributions and achievements are shown to be true in a surface sense, but their meaning to the writer has no connection with what they mean to George. He has done many things that are apparently valued as significant contributions by other people. We are made to realize how different the outcome might have been had he been able to imagine his life in a different way, and to attribute some value to it. It also becomes apparent how narrow and how subjective our image of ourselves and of any other person must necessarily be, and the extent to which our identity is constructed and defined by forces that are beyond our cognizance.

The question of whether George is over-reacting and misperceiving other people's intentions, or is unusually astute at reading people, and is simply anticipating and responding with fright to very real danger, is asked but not answered satisfactorily. We can't know with any certainty what it means when Zimmerman refuses to label George incompetent, and speaks in defense of the teacher when Mrs. Herzog, a member of the school board, wants George fired because he has first-hand knowledge of an affair between herself and the principal. It is not made any clearer when Zimmerman approaches George to discuss his evident anxiety. George immediately assumes the worst. "*Here comes the ax, praise be to God for little blessings, the suspense is over.* Caldwell wonders if the dismissal slip will be yellow, as it was with the phone company" (p.248). The principal tells him that he could arrange a leave if George needs it.

> Zimmerman has risen to his most masterly professional self. His sympathy, his cadences of tact, his comprehensive consideration are exquisite. His body almost aromatically exudes his right and competence to supervise. "If at any time," he says in gentle measured syllables, "you feel unable to go on, please come to me and tell me. It would be a disservice to yourself and to your students to continue. A sabbatical could be arranged easily. You think of it as a disgrace; you shouldn't." (p. 249)

What the principal's real motives and intentions are is open for debate, but George's understanding of the problem is not. He knows that he is engaged in a power struggle, that his means of earning a living is at stake, and that Zimmerman has an overwhelming advantage.

After all of his anxiety and preparation for the worst news, the tests and X-rays show no cancer. Whatever the physical or psychological reason, however, George has given himself up to the seductive appeal of death, and anticipation of the peace it will provide at last. "He had been spoiled. In these last days he had been saying good-bye to everything, tidying up the books, readying himself for a change, a journey" (p. 297). He is not relieved, but disappointed by the doctor's verdict.

> A steep weariness mounted before him. The prospect of having again to maneuver among Zimmerman and Mrs. Herzog and all that overbearing unfathomable Olinger gang made him giddy, sick; how could his father's seed, exploding into an infinitude of possibilities, have been funnelled into this, this paralyzed patch of thankless alien land, these few cryptic faces, those certain four walls of Room 204? (p. 298)

The conclusion is ambiguous. We know that Chiron makes a decision, and takes a great step; "Yes, in seriousness, a very great step, for which all the walking in his life had not prepared him. . . . His will, a perfect diamond under the pressure of absolute fear, uttered the final word. *Now*. . . . Chiron accepted death" (p. 298). He is lifted up by Zeus and set among the stars.

Whether we are to understand that George dies as Chiron does, and is finally granted peace and rest, or that George is casting off his delusions and getting on with his life, is not clear. A great deal of evidence, and the emotional weight of the text, seem to support the first conclusion. George is a teacher who collapses under pressures from many sources, both personal and within the occupation of teaching. He finds that he is not able to resist his enormous weariness any longer.

The novel seems to be at least partly an attempt by Updike to show a son coming to terms with his grief, guilt, and anger associated with memories of his father and the decisions he made about the way he lived and died. Whether this story has any basis in Updike's own life is an interesting question, not to be explored here; but knowing the extent to which the figure of George Caldwell, his endearing and irritating selflessness, and his decision to end his life are based in autobiography would not change the fact that Updike's novel is an extraordinarily sensitive and sympathetic portrait of a gentle, tormented man.

A Jest Of God: Margaret Laurence (1966)

> *A Voice was heard in Ramah,*
> *sobbing and loudly lamenting:*
> *it was Rachel weeping for her children,*
> *refusing to be comforted*
> *because they were no more.*
> (The Jerusalem Bible: Reader's Edition. Matthew 2: 18)

There is no doubt that in creating Rachel Cameron, Margaret Laurence intended that we should be reminded of another Rachel. Echoes of the inconsolable wailing of the biblical Rachel, the bereaved mother, reverberate throughout A Jest of God, Laurence's touching and unforgettable portrait of an unmarried, vulnerable, frightened schoolteacher, grieving for children that never were. She has captured thirty-four year old Rachel Cameron's loneliness, her fear of rejection, and the protective layers of deception she has built up around herself to hide what are in her mind unacceptable truths about who she really is. She knows that she has created an image of herself for others to see that is inconsistent with the way she sees herself. "I dramatize myself. I always did. No one would ever know from the outside, where I'm too quiet" (p. 10). She tries to go calmly about her business, conscientiously maintaining an enervating charade, playing the roles of self-sacrificing daughter and competent, caring teacher. She takes care of the needs of her ailing, manipulative mother and her noisy, busy grade two students, while resolutely ignoring her own. It is only when she is forced to face the strength of her emotional reaction to the possibility, however illusory, of having her dreams and desires for a life, a husband, and a child of her own fulfilled, and then has them snatched away again, that she wakes up and realizes what she has been doing, and begins the therapeutic process of mourning the loss of everything she never did and never had.

Rachel was born in Manawaka, Manitoba, and has spent her entire life there except for a brief time when she was away at university. Her father died before she finished her degree, leaving behind a failing business and very little money. Although she did not want to return home, and wishes she had been as determinedly ruthless in going her own way as her sister Stacey did, Rachel believes that she had no alternative but to return to Manawaka, find a teaching job, and look after her mother.

> Then it was--"Only for a year or so, Rachel, until we see." See what? She couldn't be the one to move--I do see that. She'd be lost anyplace else. Stacey was already married, and with a child, and Mac selling encyclopaedias at the west coast. She said I must see how impossible it would be for her. . . . What could I have done differently?
>
> I've been teaching in Manawaka for fourteen years. (p. 18)

Too many years of what she perceives as subtle but cruel disparagement of her personality and her looks by her mother and her sister have made Rachel painfully self-conscious and relentlessly critical of herself. When she looks in a mirror, or imagines how she appears to others, she sees a homely, gawky woman--too tall, too thin, bony and awkward. She compares herself unfavorably to her sister, who is confident and assertive, always knows the right thing to say, and who has always been attractive to boys. She envies her mother's diminutive size, and her little-girl fragility and cuteness. Rachel cannot walk down the street beside her mother without feeling that her own inadequacies become even more glaringly obvious.

> Japonica Street is filled with morning light, and Mother in her new flowered-silk coat walks along like a butterfly released from winter. Really, she is amazing for her age. Am I walking stiffly? I always wonder if my height makes me appear to be striding. Mother takes quick, short steps, the kind I find impossible. She and Stacey look all right walking down the street together, for

they're much the same height. With her, I always feel like some lean greyhound being led out for a walk. (p. 46)

She avoids social contacts as much as she can, finding it less stressful to be alone or with her mother than to seek out friends or accept invitations. She is not satisfied or happy, but she keeps telling herself that she is resigned to her life, that she is merely doing what any decent person would, and that she is wrong to want anything else. She has spent so much of her life lying, telling people what they want to hear, that she has lost touch with her true feelings. Her rebellion for the most part has been internal and unconscious. Sitting in the tabernacle, wedged into a pew between Calla, a friend and teacher on staff, and a middle-aged male stranger, Rachel expresses powerfully claustrophobic feelings, not only about her present situation, but about her whole life. "I can't move, that's the awful thing. I'm hemmed in, caught" (p. 36).

Rachel is extremely worried that she is turning into a stereotypical old-maid schoolteacher. When she finds herself dwelling obsessively on morbid thoughts, she becomes alarmed and warns herself to turn them off and think of something else.

> God forbid that I should turn into an eccentric. This isn't just imagination. I've seen it happen. Not only teachers, of course, and not only women who haven't married. Widows can become extremely odd as well, but at least they have the excuse of grief.
>
> I don't have to concern myself yet for a while, surely. Thirty-four is still quite young. But now is the time to watch out for it. (p. 8)

She hears herself speaking to her children, and wonders, "Am I beginning to talk in that simper tone, the one so many grade school teachers pick up without realizing it?" (p. 9). Lying awake at night with insomnia, frightened at the idea of asking her doctor for a few sleeping pills, she has a terrible vision of herself having become addicted to them. She believes that such vivid fantasies are an indication that it may already be too late to

stop the insidious process of deterioration and the onset of spinsterly eccentricity.

> Yet I can see myself at school, years from now, never fully awake, in a constant dozing and drowsing, sitting at my desk, my head bobbing slowly up and down, my mouth gradually falling open without my knowing it, and people seeing and whispering until finally--
>
> Oh no. Am I doing it again, this waking nightmare? How weird am I already? Trying to stave off something that has already grown inside me and spread its roots through my blood? (p. 24)

She has seen the symptoms in spinsters who innocently accept their ridiculous delusions as reality, and wonders how far she can trust her own perceptions. She considers the idea that the principal, Willard Siddley, might be spending extra time with her, not because he enjoys tormenting her, and is looking for excuses to fire her, but because he finds her a little bit attractive, and enjoys talking to her. She quickly checks this line of thought, however.

> I could be seeing the situation all askew. I so often have. And now I can only think of matronly maidens I've known, in whom solitude festered until it grew a mould as gay as a green leaf over their vision, and they would lightfoot around with a mad flittering of eyelashes, seemingly believing themselves irresistible to every male this side of the grave, and hankering after heaven so they might evolve into flirtatious angels and lure all those on the other side as well. (p. 164)

Watching the school playground from her classroom window, Rachel imagines herself as a seven-year-old, skipping rope in the same schoolyard, and admits that the idea of being a teacher was not one she had considered as a child.

> It would certainly have surprised me then to know I'd end up here, in this room, no longer the one who was scared of not

> pleasing, but the thin giant She behind the desk at the front, the one with the power of picking any coloured chalk out of the box and writing anything at all on the blackboard. It seemed a power worth possessing, then. (p. 7)

She did not plan to be a teacher, but she finds that to some extent she has absorbed the identity of the big person with the power to pass out approval or censure. She notices and empathizes with the little girls in her class who are so eager to answer any question, and who will say whatever they think the teacher wants to hear. "Interesting creatures, very young girls, often so anxious to please that they will tell lies without really knowing they're doing it." She knows that their stories are invented and fawning, "and yet I feel at ease with them in a way I don't with the boys, who have begun to mock automatically even at this age" (p. 11).

Although she did not actively choose teaching, she does find some satisfaction in it. She is too insecure and worried about what her students think of her to be naturally warm, demonstrative or affectionate with them, but she does care for them and looks after them protectively. The students give her an outlet for her desire to have someone to mother, and she finds that she is more sure of herself around them than in the company of other adults. Watching Grace Doherty with her son James, Rachel comments on her perception of their relationship, the relationship between mothers and their children in general, and by extension, her own relationship with her students.

> She gains strength from his presence. This is what happens. I've seen it with my sister. They think they are making a shelter for their children, but actually it is the children who are making a shelter for them. They don't know. (p. 56)

She is not aware, either, of the extent to which her classroom and her students provide a shelter for her.

Watching the new grade two students on the first day of school after summer vacation, she thinks in a metaphor that reveals her conviction

that she bears the entire responsibility for their well-being and safety, just as Noah did for all of the animals he kept safe during the flood.

> They troop in, two by two, all the young animals into my Ark. And I must take an interest in them, because I'm the keeper. It wouldn't be fair to them if I didn't. They trust me very little, but at least they trust me this much--whatever happens, I will take charge, they believe. (p. 161)

She feels the same kind of obligation to them that she feels for her mother. Those who depend on her for help and protection are entitled to whatever she has to give. At the same time, the ark is a safe place for her as well as her students to be during stormy and dangerous weather. She must show an interest in them whether she feels it or not, because it is part of her job. She finds, however, that once she and her students are there together, taking an interest in them becomes not just something she must pretend to do. It happens because they are children, and they are there.

> I did not think I could muster any interest at all, and yet I have. No--it isn't I. They've drawn it from me, being as they are--present and unaccounted for, here in the flesh, with loud voices which irk and beckon. (p. 161)

She needs their presence in her life as much, or more, than they need her, and she feels cheated and sad when they pass on to the next grade and out of her life. As they get older and she runs into them again, she is invariably intimidated and uncomfortable. She meets two girls, now teenagers, whom she taught in grade two. They appear strange and even sinister to her, with their wild upswept and frosted hairstyles that make them seem like aliens from another planet. Then she realizes that it is she who no longer belongs.

> This is their planet. They are the ones who live here now.
>
> I've known them nearly all their lives. But it doesn't seem so. Does thirty-four seem antediluvian to them? Why did they laugh? There isn't anything to be frightened of, in that

laughter. Why should they have meant anything snide by it? (p. 18)

A few of them, like James Doherty, become very special to her. She feels a fierce tenderness and possessiveness toward him, although this makes her more rather than less demanding of him than the others, because she will not allow herself to pay him any extra attention. She hates herself for giving the picture that James has drawn, which is extraordinary, the same hollow praise she gives all the others.

> How unfair this is to James, to demean praise in this manner. But if I don't--what might happen, if ever he or any of them discovered how I value him? They would torment me, certainly, but this is nothing to the way they would torment him. . . . But James would be cruel, too, if he knew. He'd find some means of being scathing. He'd have to, out of some need to protect himself against me. That's what stings the most. (p. 12)

To reveal her partiality would be to hand her students the most lethal weapon she can imagine--the power to reject her.

She watches her favorites, like James, very carefully. Although her perceptions are often distorted, she is highly sensitive to the needs of these children, and hates to hand them over to Willard Siddley, who thinks of them only as cogs in his efficiently functioning machine, and who occasionally need to have some rough edges smoothed off, with a strap if necessary. She tries to persuade Willard that strapping James for missing school is unnecessary, and will do more harm than good, but she does not sufficiently trust her own instincts, motivations, or wisdom to argue with him convincingly when he suggests that she is letting favoritism interfere with good judgement.

> "We must not let our emotions get the better of us, mustn't we?" What of his emotions, Willard's, the ones he would not admit to having? Yet now I can't argue. I don't know whether I only feel the way I do because I care about James, and wouldn't willingly see him hurt. Is there a better reason for not wanting him hurt?

> Now I no longer know if I have the right to feel as I do. How could I be wrong about this, when I feel it so? Or can a person be mistaken about everything? Willard's a good principal. I said so to myself not a moment ago. (p. 31)

When James returns from the principal's office, "his face like bone, his eyes staring my betrayal at me," she knows that she was right and Willard wrong; that it is better to admit to human fallibility and subjectivity than to pretend, like Willard, that a person can behave completely dispassionately and objectively. "I want only to go to Willard and tell him to listen, just to listen. *I am not neutral--I am not detached--I know it. But neither are you, and you do not know it.*" (p. 32).

Of course, she doesn't tell Willard anything. Rachel's relationship with the principal is based on fear, as are most of the relationships in her life. She doesn't like him or respect him; but she does everything she can not to upset him, including not standing up when he is standing, because she knows he is self-conscious about his height. Knowing that there is no rational basis for her nervousness, and no reason to suspect that he disapproves of her work or that she is in danger of losing her job, does not prevent the anxiety she feels in his presence. When she enters her classroom and finds him looking at something on her desk, she immediately assumes the worst. "What is he looking for? What has he found? Have I done something?" (p. 29). Later, when he sends a note asking her to come to see him in his office, Rachel does not view it as a request from one professional to another. Rather, she says "I feel I'm being summoned like a naughty child" (p. 49). When he reminds her that she promised to speak to James Doherty's mother, she feels that he is being intrusive and bullying her, but she meekly apologizes instead of objecting.

> "No--of course not. I'm sorry I haven't seen her, Willard. Honestly, I've been meaning to, and--"
>
> I can hear my own voice, eagerly abject. Probably I would get down on my knees if this weren't frowned upon. I hate all this. I hate speaking in this way. But I go on doing it. (p. 51)

Calla advises her that if she once told him to stop making a mountain out of a molehill, he would leave her alone. Rachel argues that while Calla may be able to do that, she herself could not. When pressed to explain why she can't, she fumbles for a reason. "'I--' I have to search for an adequate reason. 'I can't bear scenes. They make me ill'" (p. 53). Later, after the events of a summer have intervened, she begins to understand that her reaction to him might be faulty perception on her part.

> Behind his navy-framed glasses there is nothing, nothing lurking, nothing gathering itself to pounce. Only his whitefish eyes, hoping for some slight friendliness from me, possibly, while I sit here conjuring up dragons to scare myself with. How easily I slip back into the set patterns of responses. . . .
>
> Suddenly I wonder if what he is asking for, really, is condolence, and if he's asked for it before, and if at times he's asked for various other things I never suspected, admiration or reassurance or whatever it was he didn't own in sufficient quantity. I don't know if he is speaking differently or if I am hearing differently. (p. 163)

She begins to see him as a human being, with needs of his own, and realizes that while he may not be a particularly wise or good man, he has probably not been intentionally or maliciously tormenting her.

Rachel is jealous of James' mother, and of all mothers who do not appreciate what rare and precious gifts their children are. "Grace Doherty is all but moronic. She doesn't know what kind of child James is" (p. 11). She believes that Grace doesn't know or care that James has been seen down by the river on school days, when he has officially been sick in bed with tonsillitis. Forced by Willard Siddley to speak with her about her son's absences, Rachel proceeds to scold her, implying that she has been negligent. Grace interrupts her furiously. She explains that if whoever saw James would have looked more carefully, they would have seen her too, since she was with him, and that she felt James was well enough to be outside in the sun for a while, but not well enough to sit in school all day

without getting cranky. She doesn't want him to learn to dislike school, because she wants him to be successful. Rachel is throughly ashamed of herself for presuming to know and care more about the boy than his mother does: "I cannot hear her any longer. I cannot listen as she elaborates. How could I not have known it of her, the way she feels, her determination and hesitance? The way she cares about him" (p. 56). She is forced to recognize that not all mothers are unworthy of their children.

An incident with James a few days later shows how tautly strung Rachel is, and how much she needs the boy to return her affection. She wants to see whether he has finished his work, but he won't let her look at his paper. She knows while she is adamantly insisting that she is handling the situation badly. She doesn't know how to retreat gracefully, however, and she can't bear his cool, self-contained indifference to her.

> He does not give a damn. He hates me. I am the enemy. God damn, what is the child hiding? He won't give in. All right. I'll have to wrench it from him. What right has he? If he despises me, I must go on anyway. What is being hidden from me?" (p. 58).

Out of frustration, pain and anger at what she feels as a very personal slight, she hits his face with a ruler and makes his nose bleed.

This same incident also shows how rigidly the role of teacher defines what Rachel will and will not allow herself to do. She has been irrationally and unforgivably cruel, but as much as she would like to admit it, and beg the wounded boy's forgiveness, she cannot. As a teacher, she must retain her dignity at any price, and must always at least pretend to be right.

> I cannot say I'm sorry. Not in front of them all, twenty-six beings, all eyes. If I do say this, how shall I appear tomorrow? Cut down, diminished, undermined, very little left. If I do not say it, though, there's enough gossip for a month or more, to friends and fathers and lovingly listening mothers--*you know what Miss Cameron went and did?* Did she? . . .

> If I could put my hands upon him, lightly, and comfort him. If I could say something. It is not for me to say or do anything. How can one retrieve anything at all? Is it always past the appointed hour?
>
> . . . The only thing I can do now is to bring it off as though I meant it to occur, as though I were at least half justified. If I capitulate, they will fall upon me like falcons. (p. 59)

At the same time as she is wondering what she could possibly say that would make up for what she has done, she hears her teacher voice speaking. "'All right, James. Get on with it. See if you can get through the next few'" (p. 60).

Rachel's difficulty establishing relationships permeates her life, but becomes particularly awkward for her when dealing with prospective suitors. She has had almost no experience with men, and has discouraged the ones who have shown an interest in her. She remembers, with what sounds like some regret, that when she first came back to Manawaka, she dated Lennox Cates for a while, but when he seemed to be getting serious, she stopped seeing him.

> We didn't have enough in common, I thought, meaning I couldn't visualize myself as the wife of a farmer, a man who'd never even finished High School. He married not long afterwards. I've taught three of his children. All nice-looking kids, fair-haired like Lennox, and all bright. Well." (p. 37)

More recently, she dated a salesman that she met in Hector Jonas' funeral parlor, and was mortified to think that someone might see her with him, and find out that he sold embalming fluid for a living. She is lonesome, but she is unable to look at any man she meets without seeing him through her mother's extremely prejudiced, hyper-critical eyes.

When school is out for the summer, Rachel runs into Nick Kazlik, a handsome former schoolmate who is now a high school teacher in Winnipeg, and is visiting his parents in Manawaka for the summer. He asks Rachel out. She is flattered by his attention and easily swept off her

feet, and they become sexually involved on their second date. Rachel is too embarrassed to ask Nick to use a contraceptive, or to admit that she has not taken care of it herself, and uses only an antiquated and ineffective device that belonged to her mother.

Nick diverts himself with her for the summer, apparently to keep his mind off of his own family difficulties, and to ease the boredom of a summer in Manawaka. When Rachel says "'If I had a child, I would like it to be yours,'" he senses that she is anticipating more than a summer fling, and becomes frightened. His answer clearly shows that he has no desire to assume any responsibility for her life. "'Darling,' he says, 'I'm not God. I can't solve anything'" (p. 154). He leads her to believe that he is married, in order to explain why he has to end their relationship, and abruptly leaves Manawaka without saying good-bye.

Once he has gone and the new school year has begun, Rachel realizes that she has missed her monthly period. She assumes that she is pregnant, and goes through agonies of indecision about what to do next. She wants Nick's baby desperately, but she is so hemmed in by guilt, narrow-minded, small-town morality, and the fear of disappointing her mother--perhaps causing her to have a fatal heart attack--that Rachel can see no way out of her predicament. "It can't be borne. I can't see any way it could be. It can't be ended, either. I don't know where to go (p. 175). In a moment of despair, she tries to swallow a bottle of her mother's sleeping pills. Her will to live proves stronger than her desire to give up, however, and she throws them out the window. She realizes that what she wants most is to take back from those around her the power of choice, and control over her own life and death. "*They will all go on in some how, all of them, but I will be dead as stone and it will be too late then to change my mind*" (p. 176-7).

In a critical moment when it seems that she is most caught--"I can't cope, and I can't opt out"--she is finally forced to admit that she can't handle everything alone, and allows herself to ask for help (p. 177).

I am not praying--if that is what I am doing--out of belief. Only out of need. Not faith, or belief, or the feeling of deserving anything. None of that seems to be so.

Help me.

Help--if You will--me. Whoever that may be. And whoever You are, or where. I am not clever. I am not as clever as I hiddenly thought I was. And I am not as stupid as I dreaded I might be. Were my apologies all a kind of monstrous self-pity? How many sores did I refuse to let heal? (p. 177)

Admitting that she is not entirely self-sufficient does not solve her immediate problem. She decides at one moment to have her baby. "Look--its my child, mine. And so I will have it. I will have it because I want it and because I cannot do anything else" (p. 177). Then she thinks about what this would entail--the embarassment of going to her doctor, her mother's tricky heart, her sister's disapproval, the loss of her teaching income while she is pregnant--and changes her mind.

There is only one thing to do, and that's for me to get rid of it. By myself. No one will know, then. I was out of my mind to think I could have it. There's only one thing to be done" (p. 178).

She comes full circle back to her original position, realizing that she can't have an abortion either. But she now knows that she needs somebody to talk to besides Nick, who can't hear or answer her. Her first reaction is that there is nobody, and then she remembers that there is. She confides in her friend Calla.

The process of talking it through, and Calla's sincere and uncomplicated willingness to listen and to help in whatever way she can, finally allow Rachel to make a decision. She begins to understand that what other people expect of her is not the issue, and that she cannot be held responsible for her mother's heart or her happiness. She is finally free to make a real choice. She makes an appointment to see her doctor with the intention of having and keeping her baby.

In what might have turned out to be an anti-climactic moment, Rachel learns that the life inside her is a tumor instead of a baby. Her reaction is not relief, however, but a deep sense of bereavement. Doctor Raven assumes that she is frightened of the possibility of cancer, and tries to comfort her.

> "All right, my dear. Just sit down. I know it's been a shock."
>
> "No. No. You don't know.--"
>
> My speaking voice, and then only that other voice, wordless and terrible, the voice of some woman mourning for her children. (p. 187)

The agonizing decision about whether to keep her baby or not proves unneccessary. It turns out that the choice was never hers. The process of making the decision, however, changes the way she feels about herself irrevocably, and banishes her worst fear. "I was always afraid that I might become a fool. Yet I could almost smile with some grotesque lightheadedness at that fool of a fear, that poor fear of fools, now that I really am one" (p. 188). She has faced the worst and survived, and she now knows that one way or another, she will continue to survive.

The traumatic repercussions of Rachel's affair with Nick cause her to make some long overdue adjustments to her view of herself, her mother, her job, and the direction of her life. She draws new strength, resolution, and respect for herself from the experience, and is at last able to stand up to her mother and make some decisions for the two of them. Most of all, she learns that nobody has complete control over what happens to them, so she can give up her grim struggle to take responsibility for everything that happens. As she and her mother are leaving Manawaka for Vancouver, Rachel knows that she may not be able to predict or control what will ultimately happen to her, but at least she will not abdicate the choices she does have because of guilt, fear, duty and the opinions of others.

> Where I'm going, anything may happen. Nothing may happen. Maybe I will marry a middle-aged widower, or a longshoreman,

> or a cattle-hoof-trimmer, or a barrister or a thief. And have my children in time. Or maybe not. Most of the chances are against it. But not, I think, quite all. What will happen? What will happen. It may be that my children will always be temporary, never to be held. But so are everyone's. (P. 208-9)

She is beginning to think of her life as an adventure waiting to be experienced, rather than a series of tests of her moral worth and stamina.

The conclusion of the novel strongly suggests to me that if Rachel finds a teaching job in Vancouver, she will not be the same teacher she was. She tells us that she has accepted that many of her idiosyncracies will never change, but the learning that has come out of the last few months will change the way she thinks about herself, her students, and relationships in a very basic way. Her last conversation with Willard shows that she is learning to stop apologizing for who she is, and pretending to be somebody different. She does not tell him any unneccessarily cruel truths, but neither does she tell him what she knows he wants her to say. She is learning how to take responsibility for both giving and getting what she needs in relationships. Her new freedom and willingness to take risks will inevitably affect the quality of classroom interactions, allowing her to drop the teacher-mask with her students and to become both more independent and more closely connected with others. There will undoubtedly be students like James that will appeal to her in a special way, but I do not believe that she will have the same need for their approval, or fear of their rejection.

The Blackboard Jungle: Evan Hunter (1971)

The Blackboard Jungle is in one sense a positive statement about teaching. Richard Dadier is a first-year teacher who takes his work very seriously, and who wants his teaching to make a difference. He does succeed to a certain extent, in spite of some very intimidating obstacles, and the novel ends on a note of personal satisfaction for him. His image of himself as a strong person and a winner has been reinforced, as is the belief that he has brought some light into the unrelentingly bleak atmosphere of North Manual Trade High School, and into the lives of a few of the students there. His triumph, however, accepts, reinforces, and treats as objective truths some very ugly and highly questionable attitudes and observations about what it requires, and what it means, to be a successful teacher. It is an almost totally negative picture of students, teachers, administrators, and the educational system, and shows the life of a teacher to be impossibly difficult except for a few very exceptional individuals, like Rick, who have the strength and the personal resources to cope with it. The novel specifically addresses the problems faced by a teacher in a vocational high school, and repeatedly states that teaching in a vocational school is not like teaching in a regular academic school; but most of the difficulties that Rick encounters differ only in degree, not in their nature, from those he would have faced in an academic high school.

The relationship between the protagonist, the narrator of his story, and the author of the novel is particularly interesting in this case. Evan Hunter did serve in the Navy, did go to Hunter College after being discharged, and did teach for one year in a vocational high school, as did Rick Dadier, Hunter's teacher-hero. Much of what the narrator tells us about Rick becomes ironic when viewed with this fact in mind, because we can't be sure whether the author intends that we should see Rick as insufferably egotistical and self-righteous, or whether the narrator's implied sympathy and unreserved approval are to be accepted at face value.

If the book had been written by an author who had never taught, I think that most readers would assume that they should take what Rick says about himself and the situation with some skepticism. However, Rick's naive and holier-than-thou attitude can also be understood as the result of Hunter's very narrow and distorted view of teaching, his immaturity, his lack of experience, and his unwillingness to admit more than one possible explanation for the way that he perceived people and conditions during his one year of teaching.

When Rick walks into North Manual Trade, an inner-city New York vocational high school, to be inteviewed for his first job as an English teacher, he is nervous, but confident and eager. His reaction to discovering that a former high school friend is there to be interviewed for the same position shows his competitive nature and his self-confidence, as well as his assessment of desirable qualities in a vocational school teacher.

> It seemed unfair somehow that he should be placed in competition with someone he had liked so well so many years ago. It seemed doubly unfair because he was certain he would get the job instead of Jerry, and the knowledge made him feel a bit guilty. . . . He wanted to stop talking about the job because Jerry was such a hell of a nice guy, mild and even-tempered, and vocational schools didn't want nice guys who were mild and even-tempered. (p. 5-6)

He distracts Jerry from showing him pictures of his two children, because he doesn't want to add to his guilt by attaching faces to the children whose father he is about to deprive of a job. Rick's confidence proves justified. He impresses the English department head, Mr. Stanley, with his military background, his composure, his subject-area knowledge, and his flair for a dramatic oral presentation, and is hired immediately. He rushes home, full of excitement, anticipation, and only a very few qualms, to tell his wife, Anne, the good news. After all, Mr. Stanley's response to Rick's tentative, half-formed question about a discipline problem at North Manual is to

dismiss it outright. "Stanley's eyes tightened. 'There is no discipline problem here,' he said quickly. 'I'll look for you on Friday' " (p. 10).

As requested, Rick attends the staff orientation meeting on Friday, meets the new school principal, and learns a great deal about what will be expected of himself and the other teachers. Mr. Small is very clear, direct, and honest about his simple philosophy, which is centered entirely around order, control and containment.

> "The point is this," and here he stabbed the air with a large forefinger, *"I do not want any situations to arise!*
>
> "When those kids come into this school on Monday morning, I want them to know immediately who is boss. The teacher is boss, and I want them to know that, because we are not running any goddamn nursery school but we are running a school that will teach these kids to be useful citizens of a goddamn fine community, and pardon my French, ladies, but that's exactly the way I feel about it. . . .
>
> So here's what I want. I want a well-disciplined school because we can't teach a disorderly mob. That means obedience, instant obedience. That does not mean delayed obedience, or tomorrow obedience, or next-week obedience. It means instant obedience! It means orders obeyed on the button. The teacher is boss, remember that! . . ."
>
> He paused to consult his notes and then shouted, "Troublemakers? I want troublemakers squelched immediately! If a teacher can't handle a troublemaker, I want him sent to the department head. . . .
>
> "So on Monday morning, we come here ready for trouble. If there's no trouble, fine and dandy. If there is, we step on it immediately. We step on it the way we would step on a cockroach. I want no cockroaches in my school, the same way I want no cockroaches in my kitchen." (p. 22-3)

In the principal's mind, the teaching/learning equation is reduced to the simplest possible formula. Teachers make decisions and give orders, students obey instantly and unthinkingly, troublemakers are ground underheel like bugs, and the curriculum is whatever keeps students busy and out of trouble. There is no mention of academic goals or expected student achievement.

Rick has some definite preconceptions about what teaching will be like. The fresh paint and clean hallways of North Manual create a favorable first impression. "*A clean school is a good school,* he mused, and then he wondered in which education class he'd picked that up" (p.2). He studies his teaching schedule carefully, evaluating it as a good and a fair one on the basis of his familiarity with schools. His complacent acceptance that his knowledge of schools thus far will be helpful and sufficient, and his assumption that the metamorphosis from student to teacher happens suddenly and completely, will echo throughout the text.

> He had, of course, seen a good many programs of different shapes and form throughout his many years of schooling, the years that had prepared him for this present exalted position. It *was* an exalted position to him because, as short a time ago as June, when he had still been at Hunter College, he was a student and the other people were teachers. Now, he was a teacher and the roles were reversed, and this reversal of roles made him feel damned fine. (p. 25)

While Rick is congratulating himself over his timetable, outlining the reasons why it looks fine to him, the narrator takes the opportunity to confide in the reader the *real* scoop about its implications for Rick--the hidden factors that make it much less desirable than he believes. The narrator knows, and now we know, that Rick is in for an unpleasant shock when he meets his classes on Monday morning.

Rick's first conversation with Josh Edwards, another new teacher on staff, hints broadly at how unprepared they both are, and how simplistic

and inadequate their thinking about the difficulties of teaching has been so far.

> "I figure you can handle any kids if. . . "
>
> "If you can handle them," Rick finished for him.
>
> "Yes, exactly," Josh said, beaming. "Say, that's right. You just have to handle them, that's all. I can't wait until Monday. Can you?"
>
> "I'm looking forward to it," Rick said, his own enthusiasm a bit overshadowed by Josh's
>
> "Me too. You think we'll have any trouble?"
>
> "I doubt it," Rick said. "I'm just going to get up there and teach. Hell, I'm not looking to be a goddamned hero." (p. 32)

They envision teaching as something that a teacher will intuitively know how to do--something that will emerge from somewhere deep inside, whether or not they can think about or articulate it clearly, once they are standing in front of a real class. The reader can feel that both Josh and Rick have been set up for a painful shock by their faulty notions, their experiences in schools which have disguised the role of teacher with an opaque veil of deceptive simplicity, and the inadequacy of teacher education programs.

The description of Rick's first home-room class is a collage of stock teacher responses, clichéd mannerisms, and teacher-education truisms. As he leads them from the assembly to the classroom, he puts on his best teacher face, and pretends to be tough and authoritative. "'Follow me,' he said unsmiling. 'No talking on the way up.' That, he figured, was the correct approach. Let them know who's boss right from the start, just the way Small had advised" (p. 37). He snaps at students, issues orders with no allowance for contradiction, and generally lets them know that he is in charge.

> "When you have anything to say, raise your hand. We might as well get a few things straight right this minute. First, I want you

to fill out the Delaney cards. While you're doing that, I'll tell you what it's going to be like in my classroom." (p. 39)

He is proud of himself for remembering to delegate little chores like passing out supplies and opening windows to the students who seem the most likely to give him trouble, to give very specific directions, and to call on individual students rather than the group as a whole. "All according to the book. All fine and dandy. Damn, if things weren't going fine" (p. 39). He has some anxious moments when students insist on calling him 'teach,' and resorts to a favorite and time-honored teacher threat. "I don't want to have to mention this again," he said. "The next boy who calls me 'teach' will find himself sitting here until four o'clock this afternoon. Now remember that" (p. 43).

He isn't completely happy with the cold atmosphere that his attitude generates, but he has had no alternative ways of behaving made available to him.

> The boys stared at him solemnly, a wall of hostility suddenly erected between Rick's desk and their seats. He sensed the wall, and he wished he could say something that would cause it to crumble immediately. But he would not back down on this 'teach' informality, and so he stayed behind his side of the wall and stared back at the boys sternly. (p.43)

The voice from his gut which is expressing discomfort and telling him that there is something wrong with what is happening is drowned out by the many voices in his head--voices of teachers from his own school days, teacher education professors, Mr. Small, even the fictional Mr. Chips--that tell him the correct ways for a teacher to behave. He doesn't worry about the tension between his natural inclination to respond in the classroom as a real human being, and the script that he believes he must adhere to, and which rigidly dictates his lines and their delivery. His response to the first direct challenge to his authority by a student shows how self-consciously he adopts the posture of teacher.

> He walked directly to the boy, pushed his face close to his, and said "Sit down, son, and take off that hat before I knock it off."
>
> He said it tightly, said it the way he'd spoken the lines for Duke Manatee when he'd played *The Petrified Forest* at Hunter. (p.66)

The act has the intended effect. The student backs down in fright, and Rick makes the most of his advantage. After standing over the boy menacingly and making him squirm for some time, "He turned his back on the boy and walked back to the front of the room and his own desk. His face was tightly set, and he made his nostrils flare, the way he'd learned to do a long time ago in his first dramatics class" (p. 67). Rick is a natural actor, and does not feel that the pretence is a threat to his integrity, or that his attempts to establish relationships based on objectifying himself and his students are dehumanizing for both, and counter-productive. These behaviors are just common sense, built into the job, and necessary for self-preservation.

Rick's internal dialogue assessing his first morning of teaching shows how his self-talk enables him to create an understanding of the experience that will cause him a minimum of discomfort.

> He congratulated himself upon what he considered almost perfect behavior so far. He had made a few mistakes, true, but on the whole he had done well. He had shown a tough exterior to the kids, and whereas tough teachers were not always loved, they were always respected. He was not particularly interested in being loved. Mr. Chips was a nice enough old man, but Rick was not ready to say good-by yet. He was interested in doing his job, and that job was teaching. In a vocational school you had to be tough in order to teach. You had to be tough, or you never got the chance to teach. (p.51).

He does not yet question why it is that such behavior has come to be viewed as normal, or whether there are other possible responses to the nature of the job other than to put on a false face every morning; "So, whereas being a little Caesar was contrary to his usual easy-going manner, he

recognized it as a necessity, and he felt no guilt" (p.45). He does admit the passing thought that "there was the danger of becoming so goddamned tough, of course, that you forgot you were also supposed to be a teacher," but dismisses it quickly. "Rick would never carry it quite that far. He intended to lay down the law, and then to relax, never letting discipline establish itself as a problem"(p. 52). He believes that once discipline becomes an ingrained response, there will be time for joking and a few laughs. He doesn't recognize that his need to control every aspect of classroom interaction, and his attempts to relegate discipline to the status of a non-issue through an authoritarian approach, is in itself establishing discipline as a huge problem; a problem that any later softening on his part, and willingness to re-negotiate the terms of his relationship with students, will not resolve.

The metaphors used by Rick and by others in the novel to speak about teachers and teaching communicate much more than any explicit statement of philosophy or beliefs. Two overriding metaphors, that of the school as a jungle and the school as a garbage can, permeate the language and the thinking of both teachers and students, and most clearly reveal their attitudes toward teaching, students, and the function of the school. There are many others that are not carried as far, but which are also important. Students are referred to as cockroaches, as lumps of clay, and as vacuums; and the school and its students are talked about as impersonal, anonymous parts of a large, malfunctioning machine. The other teachers in the school look like derelict street people, while Rick sees himself as a priest, a doctor, a wealthy philanthropist, and a hero.

The image of the vocational school as a "blackboard jungle" immediately establishes the school as a harsh and dangerous environment ruled by the most powerful and agressive animals. The rules that regulate life in other schools, and in civilized society, and that are assumed in teacher education classes, don't apply here. In this environment, survival depends on instinct and individual resources, and no help can be expected

from its other inhabitants. Rick wonders why this reality was ignored in his education classes.

> Why prepare a teacher for an altogether different type of student, an ideal student, and then throw him into a jungle hemmed in by blackboards and hope that he can avoid the claws and the teeth? If the teacher survives, well all fine and dandy. If he doesn't, the wild animals will surely survive, won't they? But who wants wild animals in the street? (p. 131)

Life in a jungle is cold and cruel, and not significantly affected by the survival or the death of any individual member.

Solly Klein, a veteran teacher, is a strong influence on the teachers around him and a very vocal proponent of the "garbage can" theory of vocational school education.

> I'll tell you something, Dadier. This is the garbage can of the educational system. Every vocational school in the city. You put them all together, and you got one big, fat, overflowing garbage can. And you want to know what our job is? Our job is to sit on the lid of the garbage can and see that none of the filth overflows into the streets. That's our job. (p. 58)

Rick's polite disagreement with this view urges Solly to argue his case even more eloquently. He says that schools like North Manual Trade serve a specific purpose. "All the waste product, all the crap they can't fit into a general high school, all that stink goes into the garbage can that's the vocational high school system. That's why the system was invented." According to Solly, "some bright bastard" came up with an idea for an institution to contain society's dregs, so that his wife and daughters could walk the streets safely. "We're just combinations of garbage men and cops, that's all." When he is accused of being bitter, he admits it freely; "Sure," Solly said. "I should have been a teacher instead of a garbage man" (p. 58).

This metaphor equates living human beings with dead, decaying refuse and excrement which is worse than just rotten, smelly and disgusting. It is dangerous. The decomposing organic matter in the

garbage is worthless and disposable, breeds bacteria and disease, attracts flies, and will contaminate healthy people if carelessly handled. The image also carries with it powerful feelings about the finalty and the utter hopelessness of the situation which are incompatible with thoughts about possibilities for growth, change, or movement by students or teachers toward a better life.

Although Rick is disgusted by this vision of teaching, he realizes its seductive power, and finds that he is internalizing it and giving in to it without intending to. After many attempts to accomplish something more than what he sees around him, and many defeats, he realizes how close he is coming to giving up the struggle.

> Time and again, he found himself remembering Solly Klein's garbage can metaphor, and more and more he began to see himself as the fellow with the fat behind who sat on the lid of the can. He fought against thinking that way because he knew the thought preceded the action, and the instant he conceded the kids were filth and he was a garbage man, he would stop trying to reach them, and he didn't want that to happen. (p. 206)

Solly's observation about the improbability of leaving or finding a better position within the system adds a claustrophobic feeling to an already hideous image. "I tried to get out of it a long time ago. But once you're appointed here, it's like being made a guard on Devil's Island. There's no escape" (p.61). It also invests students with the anti-social and violent tendencies of hardened criminals, and justifies the constant vigilance, mistrust, and the use of force by teachers.

Some of the other images associated with students are intentionally denigrating, and some are not, but all are dehumanizing. Principal Small's rousing pre-school-opening pep talk to the teaching staff, partially quoted earlier, speaks of handling troublemakers as stamping on cockroaches. This communicates very clearly that any student who has any difficulty following set policies and conforming to a rigid code of conduct should be treated as less than human and

entirely dispensible. Rick talks about choosing to teach when he realized that he had no other talents with which to make a creative contribution to the world.

> So Rick had seized upon teaching, had seized upon it fervently, feeling that if he could take the clay of undeveloped minds, if he could feel this clay in his hands, could shape this clay into thinking, reacting, responsible citizens, he would be creating. (p. 135)

Viewed in this way, Rick assumes the qualities of a supernatural potter whose job is to forcibly mold the slippery, amorphous clay into something worthwhile. Students are reduced to inanimate matter, oblivious to what is being done to them. The attitude that students have no intelligence, desires, or intentions of their own is further strengthened by another image that comes to Rick's mind, that of students heads as vacuums:

> He could hear the scratching of pen on looseleaf paper, could see the tops of the boys' heads as they worked.
>
> *What the hell goes on inside those heads?* he wondered.
>
> Probably nothing. Zero. Perfect vacuum.
>
> *This is a job for a man with a vacuum cleaner,* he mused.
>
> How do you go about cleaning a vacuum? Do vacuums get dirty? How do you get inside a vacuum to begin with? (p. 91)

He entertains the image playfully, skeptically, and seriously all at the same time. Not until the last few pages of the novel does Rick's consistent and automatic objectification of students begin to change.

Another metaphor put forward for Rick's consideration, again from Solly Klein, is that of the entire institution and its staff and students as making up one giant mechanical monster. This machine creates a destructive energy, and it subsumes and alters its individual components.

> "I'm just trying to say that you've got to recognize these bastards as one big machine," Solly persisted. "You start picking it apart and looking for individual cogs and wheels, and you get no place. The machine is labelled North Manual Trades High

> school. It's manufactured in New York City, and it happens to have defective parts. It doesn't do a damn thing right, and it wasn't made to do anything in the first place. . . .
>
> "Miller," Solly went on, "is just a part of the machine. . . . That little jerk may be supporting his blind grandmother, and he may be the nicest kid in his neighborhood. He gets inside the machine, and he becomes a part of the machine." (p. 151)

Students become generic, interchangeable, and defective parts of this machine, with no motivations of their own. Thinking of problems with students in this way makes the search for solutions pointless, since no student can be understood or dealt with individually.

Rick's initial thoughts about his colleagues, when he visits the school office after the orientation meeting, are not flattering. "The older teachers were all lined up like bums at the salvation army" (p. 28). This severe and hastily formed judgement on their apparent indigence and lack of pride in themselves or interest in their work contrasts sharply with the way Rick imagines himself in his new job as he enters his empty classroom just moments later.

> The room was absolutely silent. The sun streamed through the windows, and the dust motes floated lazily on the broad golden beams. There was something almost sanctified about the room at this moment, and Rick walked solemnly to his desk and looked out over the rows of empty seats, feeling something like a priest in a new parish awaiting his Sunday congregation. (p. 29)

He defines himself as qualitatively different from the tenured teachers. He cares; he is serious about teaching; he has received a call which makes him special; he is a man with a mission. North Manual Trade High School and its students are in desperate need of what he has to give, whether or not they are able to appreciate it, or willing to co-operate with his efforts on their behalf.

Another image he invents to help him to understand what he does is that of teacher as doctor. He is an expert and professional whose job it is to

diagnose and cure (teach) patients (students) who do not have the intelligence or the expertise to be allowed input in decisions regarding their treatment (education).

> It [teaching in a vocational school] was like administering a shot of penicillin to a squirming, protesting three-year-old. The three-year-old didn't know the penicillin was good for him. The doctor simply had to ignore the squirming and the protesting and jab the needle directly into the quivering buttocks.
>
> It was the same thing here. These kids didn't know education was good for them. There would be squirming and protesting, but if the teacher ignored all that and shot the needle of education directly into all those adolescent behinds, things would turn out all right. (p. 51)

He tries to explain to his wife his predicament of wanting to teach, but not being allowed to, this way. "It was like a man standing on a street corner giving out fifty dollar bills, and having a tough time finding takers" (p. 206). What this equation doesn't take into account is that a fifty dollar bill has no value in itself. It becomes valuable only when it can be exchanged for something that is perceived as filling a need. Rick's students don't see the education he is offering as units of exchange that will get them something they want or need.

Rick's image of himself as a hero is a recurring one. By repeatedly and vehemently denying that he has any aspirations to the title, he is keeping the idea firmly in mind, and measuring himself against a picture of teacher as a macho, crusading white knight, riding through the school on a white charger and dispelling the rampant pessimism and spirit of failure that floats through the school like a fog, to see how closely it fits.

> Dashing into the toilet to put an end to the tobacco habit was not exactly an occupation of heroic proportions, even though it was fatiguing disciplinary work. Nor was charging up and down marble steps, even if he had done it on a splendid white stallion, a task that was heroic in its nature. . . . He had done nothing

heroic, and he was still not looking for trouble, and he was still resolved not to be a "goddamned hero." (p.51)

Not surprisingly, Dadier does assume the role of hero, before the end of his first teaching day, by rushing in to rescue a female colleague from being raped by a male student. This incident seems to be an attempt to illustrate his exemplary moral stature, his unselfconscious courage, and his determination to make a difference in the school. What it does even more effectively, however, is underscore the atmosphere of depravity and callous indifference in the school, and the amoral, animalisic tendencies of its students. Rick's reputation as a hero depends to a great extent on the fact that he has absolutely no competition for the title. He is entirely alone in his struggle to prevent the rape. Nobody else even shows much concern that it happened, including Lois Hammond, the victim. She later admits to Rick that she is so bored with teaching that she almost welcomed the attack.

"Will you mind if I consider the first day of school the only true piece of excitement we've had since I've been here? . . . I mean the time that stupid slob tried to rape me, Rick. That's exactly what I mean. My God, sometimes I wish he'd succeeded." (p.256)

The rest of the teaching staff show very little concern, having decided that the rape was to some extent inevitable and even deserved, since the severely tailored gray flannel suit she was wearing did not entirely disguise the fact that Lois is an attractive woman with a shapely body. Solly Klein predicts a rape as soon as he sees her at the orientation, "either from the students or the teachers or maybe both. Unless they locked her up in the bookroom where no one could take advantage of the view" (p. 20). Principal Small expresses no sympathy, disappointment, or worry about the safety of teachers. His reaction is anger at what he considers a personal affront. His school has been made to look bad, and his concern is with seeing the offending student punished, and using the incident to impress on the rest of the students that if they cause trouble, they will be dealt with just as severely.

> "I'm telling you this story," Small went on, "to illustrate an important point." He paused, and then roared, "I WILL STAND FOR NO NONSENSE IN MY SCHOOL, IS THAT UNDERSTOOD? . . . No nonsense at all. None. Never. We took care of Douglas Murray, and we'll take care of anyone who steps out of line. Remember that boys, because we'll all be a lot happier if you do. And you'll be a whole lot sadder if you don't." (p. 80)

The students decide that a jail sentence is too severe a punishment for a simple attempted rape, and feel more sympathy for the rapist than for the victim. "They figured this for a prison rap, if anything, and all because the poor bastard tried to cop a feel. And all because Dadier had stepped in and made like a goddamn hero." (p. 80). Rick's actions are regarded by the students as "the basest, most treacherous type of villainy." He becomes the target of a hate campaign, and is ambushed and savagely beaten by a gang of students before the end of his first month of teaching. The rape is symbolic of the senseless, impersonal hatred, the cynicism, and the absence of any warm human emotion in the school. Rick is coming to view his job as being the protector of decency, and the sole civilizing influence on the savages in the jungle.

The qualities that will allow Rick to survive the strain of his first semester of teaching relatively undamaged, in spite of unruly classes, malicious students, a narrow-minded principal, losing his first child during delivery, and the very aggressive sexual advances of the same female teacher that he saved from being raped, become more obvious by their absence in Josh Edwards, Rick's friend who is also a rookie teacher. Josh is a "nice guy" and a sensitive, caring person, but he is not gifted with Rick's toughness and complacent self-assurance. On a Friday afternoon at the end of a long week, he and Josh go to a bar for a few drinks after school. They get slightly drunk, and Josh reveals how disappointed, cheated, and confused he feels, and how unfair it seems to him that he must discipline rather than teach, when teaching is what he wants to do. He tells Rick that he has always wanted to teach, and now that he is a teacher,

he is going to teach. He then asks a poignant question, one that would never occur to Rick, and gets an answer that shows how differently the two of them interpret and explain what is happening.

> Josh nodded reflectively. "Am I a bad guy, Rick?"
>
> "You're a good guy, Josh. A damn fine guy."
>
> "So why won't they let me teach?"
>
> "'Cause they're bad guys," Rick said.
>
> "Oh no, don't say that."
>
> "Yes," Rick said, "they're bad guys."
>
> "No," Josh said with drunken dignity, "tha's a common error, fallacy. They ain't bad guys. They're jus' ignorant."
>
> "Same thing," Rick said.
>
> "No, no, Rickie, don't say that. Please don't say that. These kids ain't bad guys. I mean it. Now I mean it, so pay attention an' please don't say that again. They are not bad guys. They jus' don't know any better."
>
> "They ain't good guys," Rick said, blinking his eyes, holding to the bar top. He tried to concentrate on what Josh was saying because he had a feeling this was very important to Josh, and he didn't want to appear rude and not pay attention to something that was obviously very important to somebody else.
>
> "They're good guys," Josh said. "Yes, jus' like me an' you. Good guys. Unless they don't get taught, then they'll be bad guys, Rick. Tha's why I got to teach them, you see? Can y'unerstan' that? It ain't fair that no one should want to teach them. Teachers got to teach, Rickie, 'an especially these kids. Please unerstan' me, Rickie. (p. 107)

Josh is very concerned about what is wrong with him. He assumes that he must be a bad person because he is not able to immediately win students over and teach the kind of lessons that he wants to. He believes that the difficulties he is having stem from defects in his character, not from a lack of learning about more effective strategies for communicating with

students. Rick understands the problem in much the same way that Josh does, except that he is proving to himself that he is man enough to take the punishment, and that he does have the "right stuff"--the necessary innate qualities--including a convincingly authoritarian attitude, and a strong fighting instinct.

On the same Friday evening mentioned above, Rick and Josh are beaten up by three students after they leave the bar. Rick is the intended target of the attack because of the students' perception that he is responsible for sending a fellow student to jail, which makes him more determined than ever to show students and staff that he will not admit defeat or be easily frightened off. He is ashamed to go back to school on Monday morning, not because he has taken a beating, but because he doesn't want the appearance of his face to be misread.

> His face shouted, "I've been beaten," and he didn't want his face to advertise that slogan because it wasn't a true one. He had not really been beaten. He'd been ambushed and kicked around, but he hadn't been beaten, and there was a vast difference between getting beat up and being beaten. And so he was ashamed of this face which told such flagrant lies, this face that said, "Look at me. I am a beaten man." He studied it in the mirror, and he thought *I am not a beaten man.* (p. 121)

Rick goes back into his classes convinced that if his students want a battle, he will make the fight worth their while, and with no doubt in his mind who the winner will be. Josh is not able to shrug it off with Rick's equanimity. In the next few weeks, Rick sees the effect that it has had on his friend.

> The beating that night had done something to Josh. He'd come to school the following Monday, of course, but something seemed to have gone out of him. Not his desire to teach the kids, certainly, because that was certainly still obviously there. The energy, perhaps, the restless, nervous energy that had been so

much a part of him before. Or perhaps his optimistic viewpoint. Perhaps that had fled.

> Whatever it was, he was not looking well lately. There were heavy pockets of shadow beneath his eyes, and his cheekbones stood out too prominently, and Rick didn't like the tight way he carried his mouth. There was such a thing as trying too hard, even in a vocational school, and Josh was apparently doing just that. (p. 155)

In the last week of October, Josh brings his collection of rare and valuable jazz records to school, hoping that sharing them in his classes will help to build a relationship. The students do not have the background to appreciate them, and they are bored with them almost immediately. They become increasingly restless and frustrated, and the situation escalates into pandemonium when Josh persists in playing them over the students' protests. They smash most of his recordings, and the teacher is knocked down and his glasses are broken in the scuffle. Josh is made to appear ridiculous and ineffectual. He does not have Rick's "cojones," (an expression Rick uses) or he would have put the students in their place. The narrator implies that Josh's feminine softness--his inability to impose obedience and order through the strength of his personality--is his undoing. "Edwards was screaming wildly now like a woman, just screaming and saying nothing" (p. 172).

After the students have left, Rick discovers Josh sitting on the floor in the middle of his broken records. Josh tells Rick what has happened, and begins to cry as he tells it.

> He was ashamed of the tears, but he couldn't stop them, and they streamed down his face together with the blood, and Rick put his arm around Josh's shoulder and held him with a firm grip, and Josh kept crying and saying, "Why'd they want to do that, Rick? Why'd they want to do that? What'd I do wrong? Rick, they broke my records." (p. 173)

Rick feels his friend's pain deeply, and reaches out to him to offer comfort and strength. The image is deeply touching, and also troubling. Rick's protective, very masculine reaction suggests that Josh's "feminine" qualities are somehow to blame for what happened. The implication seems to be that Rick's ability to offer a strong shoulder, and his refusal to give in to his own desire to cry, in themselves make him superior to Josh, and unquestionably a better teacher.

> Rick crouched alongside Josh on the floor of the classroom, and he kept his arm around Josh's shoulders, and he listened to the sobs that wracked his friend's body, and he wanted to cry himself, but he didn't. (p. 173)

Josh's sensitivity and willingness to express honest emotion are not given any consideration as qualities that might be valuable, or work positively for him, if he could learn more about how to generate trust and a mutual respect for vulnerability in the classroom. The failure is Josh's--in his inability to rule by fear and to command the kind of instant obedience that Small wants in his school. Nothing in his teacher training, in the schools, or in the way students have been conditioned to think about teachers, has created any possibility for Josh to find ways to work with his strengths, or use his very special qualities to enrich the school and make it a more well-balanced, human place to be.

The consequence is that Josh gives up at Thanksgiving. He tells Rick that he feels like a failure, that he has had to admit that he is "no damn good," and that he is not a teacher. "I'm not teaching. I'm standing up there doing a lot of talking and waving my hands a lot, but I'm not teaching anything" (p. 220). In his mind, being a good teacher is very narrowly defined, and it is something that one either is or is not. He has decided that he does not meet the criteria for a good teacher, according to this rigid definition, and that he never will, because good teachers are born that way. Since he was not born with the qualities that real teachers possess, the most he can hope to do is to fake being a teacher. He will never be a real

teacher, in the same way that iron cannot be turned into real gold by giving it a coat of gold-colored paint.

Unlike Josh, who has no faith in his innate teaching abilities, Rick starts out believing that he can be successful as a teacher by imitating how he thinks teachers should behave, and pretending to know what he is doing. He soon discovers that this will not be enough, but he does not assume that this means he is a failure. He is angry that he hasn't been given the knowledge and skills that he needs, and his first reaction is to lay the blame on a faulty teacher education system. He realizes that there is much he doesn't know, and while his arrogance, pride, and stubbornness do get in the way, he is willing to accept responsibility for not knowing, while refusing to burden himself with excessive guilt and self-blaming talk. This allows him the freedom and the emotional safety to look for the learning in difficult situations. When it strikes him that Miller, a student that Rick wants to help, but who won't let him get close enough, might have reason to believe that Rick thinks less of him because he is black, he decides that he must find some way to correct the misunderstanding. At this point, he shows a dramatic shift in his thinking, realizing that what is happening or not happening in the students' minds is at least as important as what he is doing to them, or for them. He decides to correct Miller's mistaken assumption, and in doing so, he sets in motion a chain of events that leads to what he sees as his victory.

Rick takes the opportunity in one of his classes to bring up the topic of racism, hoping to indirectly let Miller know that he does not judge people by their color. His use of words like "kike," "spic," "nigger," and "wop" is reported by one of his students to the administration, and Mr. Stanley, the English department head, makes a series of visits to observe Rick's teaching. Rick is eventually summoned to Principal Small's office for a talk. He goes anxiously, anticipating that Mr. Stanley has evaluated his teaching as unsatisfactory, and that he might be fired. When the principal, instead of mentioning the things that Rick knows he has done poorly, accuses him of racism, Rick is furious. He tries to explain that he

was using the racist terms to teach tolerance. Small does not believe him, and Rick loses his temper, risking his job by refusing to compromise his self-respect.

> "That's enough!" Rick shouted. "That's just about enough, Mr. Small. I've heard enough!"
>
> "What?" Small said.
>
> "I don't care if you're the mayor. I don't care. I don't care if you fire me right this minute, do you understand? I don't want to hear anymore of that, not another word, not if it costs me my job. I don't have to listen to it, do you hear me? So just stop it, that's all. Just stop it, Mr. Small." (p. 212)

Rick's indignant outburst and his unapologetic refusal to even listen to the charges is enough of a surprise to Mr. Small that it puts him on the defensive, and convinces him of Rick's innocence. They exchange apologies, and Rick leaves exonerated, still in possession of his job, but still angry.

The final section of the novel follows Rick's developing relationship with Greg Miller, the black student who Rick fears may be the one who lied about him to Mr. Small. As punishment for daring to stand up to the principal, Rick is given the responsibility of producing the Christmas assembly. Miller works closely with him to make it a success, while remaining just as hard to get along with in the classroom. There are moments when it seems like Rick is making progress in convincing Miller to take responsibility for his future by treating his schooling more seriously, but many more moments when Rick feels like he is wasting his time and his breath. He finally realizes that Miller has needs and an agenda of his own. He likes to be seen as a leader in pulling the Christmas show together, and to feel challenged and useful. But he also likes the approval he gets in the classroom for his leadership in creating disorder and misbehavior. Rick adjusts to the two-headed gorgon, and learns to accept both the good Miller and the bad Miller. He wonders which one is the "real" Miller. He does not yet understand that the boy is not

schizophrenic; that he is just meeting the same needs in two different ways.

Two days before the Christmas assembly, Rick finally has the break-through he has been waiting for. He reads "The Fifty-First Dragon" by Heywood Broun to one of his classes, and watches a spark of interest catch and grow into a bonfire of excitement. That same day, he is called to the hospital because Anne has gone into labor, but their excitement turns to grief when the baby is stillborn. Rick misses the last two days of school before the holiday, and the Christmas assembly he has put so much time into, to be with his wife. He heads back to school after the vacation thoroughly dispirited, ready to admit that he is among those who have chosen the easy road, and to concede victory to the students and the system.

> They're all rotten, and they're all bastards, and I agree with Solly Klein now, and I should have seen it in the beginning, Solly, for you are all-wise, Solly, and you know all about baseballs crashing into blackboards alongside your head, and you know all about the machine that won't run no matter what you do to it--no it'll run but it won't produce. You know all about this big goddamned treadmill with all its captive rats scurrying to get nowhere, scurrying to get right back where they came from. You know all about it, Solly, and you tried to tell me but I wouldn't listen because I was the Messiah come to teach. Except even a Messiah wouldn't be heard in this dump.
>
> So why the hell bother? Why should I teach? Why should I get ulcers? (p. 295)

At this point, he still sees the problem in terms of polar opposites--either he is a Messiah, or he is garbage man. There is no middle ground, and no other options.

Rick's fate hangs in the balance in a typically Hollywood-style climax. Artie West, a student who has been harboring a grudge since Rick humiliated him, attacks him with a knife. Rick is overpowered, cut on the

arm, and in danger of being hurt more seriously. Greg Miller comes to his aid and helps to subdue West and his friend. Rick sees Miller's decision to intervene as a turning point for the boy, and senses that Miller's suggestion that they forget the principal, and just go to lunch, is a test for him.

> There was something strange in Miller's eyes, and the smile that usually dominated his face was not there now. His eyes were inquisitive, and his entire body seemed to strain forward, tensed, waiting. He did not take his eyes from Rick's face, and those eyes pleaded, pleaded with a mute intensity. Rick stared at him, and he did not understand at first, and then abruptly he realized that Miller had not chosen the easy road when he'd joined the fight against West. Miller had made a choice, and for once that choice had led him down the hard road.
>
> And now there was another choice, and Rick weighed it carefully, and his eyes held Miller's in the ring of faces around him. It would make things a hell of a lot simpler if he just sent all the kids to lunch and forgot all about Belazi and West. It would make things simpler the way things would have been vastly simpler had he not interfered in that rape so long ago. It would be easy, so easy to say, "All right, let's just forget all this," and then go back to teaching the way he'd come to teach lately. . . .
>
> He said, "I'm taking them down, Miller," and Miller said nothing, and then Rick added, "I have to." (p. 304-5)

His reward comes as he is leaving the room with the two culprits. He hears one falsetto voice mocking him, saying "Oh Daddy-oh! You're a *hee*-ro," and a second voice shout "Oh, shut yo' goddamn mouth!" The exchange makes him smile, because the second voice belongs to Greg Miller.

> Rick smiled as he stepped into the corridor with Belazi and West ahead of him. He remembered what he'd thought earlier, before the fight, remembered what he'd thought about just one kid, one kid, that's all, one kid getting something out of it all, one kid he

could point to and say, "I showed him the way," and that would make it all right, if he could only say that. (p. 305)

Rick has attained his objective of reaching one student, but very little else has changed. He is still alone in his crusade. His colleagues scoff, and call him a "hot-rod" bucking for a promotion when he tells them, "It's possible to do a good job here." They envy him, show a new respect for him, and they all join in teasing him about being a hero.

> "Knife wounds mean nothing to heroes," Manners said. He flicked an imaginary cut on his shoulder. "Just a scratch, man."
>
> "That's Dadier's trouble," Savoldi said sadly. "He's a professional hero."
>
> "No," Rick said, smiling. "I'm just a teacher."
>
> Solly turned from the window a moment and looked at Rick curiously. "Yeah," he said. "A teacher." (p. 309)

The message seems to be that the change in Rick is sufficient to make a real difference, and the suggestion is there that Solly may be at least thinking about what Rick said. The glimmer of hope is left at that, as the teachers quickly slip back into their familiar routine of grousing and complaining. Rick finds this atmosphere comfortable and secure--he has proven that he can make a difference, and that is enough.

> He sat and listened, and he was very happy here with these other men in the lunchroom, hearing Solly talk. . . . But he was not sorry when the bell sounded, ending the lunch period, announcing the beginning of his fifth period, and he smiled when when Solly said "Well, back to the salt mines." (p. 309)

In Rick's perception, the other teachers have given up and given in to a dehumanizing system, while he has fought it's effects single-handedly and won. It would be interesting to talk to Rick after he had been teaching for ten years, and to see whether he had revised any of his impressions of himself, the school, or the other teachers, or come to understand that his simplistic, black-and-white assessment might not be doing justice to a very complex situation.

Hunter's neat, sugary ending suggests that this one minor victory and the satisfaction of having reached one student, after three hundred pages documenting a situation in which the odds are stacked against Rick in every conceivable way, will outweigh the demoralizing negatives that he faces daily and tip the balance in his favor, is not convincing. When he is attacked and cut by a student with a knife, the fact that one student in the class comes to his aid hardly seems adequate recompense for the frustration and the physical danger he faces, and will presumably continue to face. There is no suggestion that he can do anything about students like Artie West, who come to school with huge chips on their shoulders, carrying knives.

Evan Hunter did teach in a vocational high school for a short time after he graduated from Hunter college, just as Rick did, and he was quite possibly inspired to write this novel as a result of the experience. One can only hope that the depiction of the school, the students, and Rick's colleagues were magnified for dramatic effect. Even given this novelistic licencs, it is disturbing that conditions in this school could even be represented in this way. The novel is intended to be grittily realistic, not fantastic. The image of teaching which exists in our culture has made the creation of the hostile environment in this novel strangely matter-of-fact and unremarkable, and by drawing on its existence, and using it, the novel has contributed measurably to this popular image.

To Serve Them All My Days: R. F. Delderfield (1972)

To Serve Them All My Days stands out among the novels I have read for this study because it is the one that paints the most unreservedly optimistic and idealistic picture of teaching. In a brief preface, which he calls "A Qualified Disclaimer," Delderfield tells the reader that it would be less than truthful to say that his characters are not drawn from real life; but that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the characters in the novel, and specific people he encountered in his school experience.

> Every character in fiction is an amalgam of factors drawn from the author's memory and imagination and this is particularly true of *To Serve Them All My Days* . No character here is a true portrait, or caricature, of any master or boy I ever encountered at my six schools and one commercial college, between 1917 and 1929, but aspects of people I met are embodied in all of them. (Preface)

He goes on to say that he used an average of six schoolmasters and six boys in creating each character in the novel, and that his intent was not to slight or to criticize anybody; rather it was "only to portray life at school as I saw it up to 1940, when I had entered my twenty-ninth year." He also tells us that "I was glad to leave five of the six schools but there is one I still regard with the greatest affection. I leave it to the reader to sort the wheat from the chaff" (Preface).

The novel is an account of the life of a teacher in a British boarding school between the two world wars. Although it is intended to be realistic, it is not a thinly disguised re-creation of the author's own experience. In fact, although the narrator of David's story does have access to his thoughts and feelings, the connection between the narrator and the protagonist is sufficiently detached and ambiguous to let us know that although the author probably would identify and sympathize with most of the views expressed by David, and is obviously using him as a mouthpiece for his own

educational philosophy, it does not seem as though he intends David to be seen simplistically as infallible, larger than life, or always admirable. It is impossible to determine how much Delderfield intended that we should approve of or disagree with David's ideas, and how much of what a reader might perceive as implied criticism of David as a man and a teacher is imposed on the text by a reader like myself who may find some of David's beliefs overly simplistic, inflexible, and suffocatingly paternalistic. Whatever Delderfield's real opinions and intentions, the novel does present one teaching context, and one teacher's view of himself in the role, in great detail.

The novel follows the career and the personal triumphs and tragedies of David Powlett-Jones from 1918, when, at twenty-one years old, he arrives at Bamfylde school in Devon as a new teacher, through more than two decades, until he is in his mid-forties, headmaster of the same school, and the second world war is in its early stages. It relates his struggles to throw off the effects of his war experiences, the challenges he faces and overcomes as an inexperienced teacher, his first happy marriage and the death of Beth, his wife, and one of his twin daughters, his deep affection for one headmaster and his differences with another, his appointment as headmaster, and his somewhat less smooth but nevertheless satisfying second marriage. It closes as World War II is in its second year.

David finds his way to Bamfylde school through the machinations of fate and happenstance, not as a result of a deliberate choice. We are told that as a boy before World War I, he had only the haziest idea of what his future would be, except that he was "a boy who had dreamed of scholarship and celebrity " and that he wanted to make his father, who died in a mine explosion when David was an adolescent, proud of him (p. 15). He spends three years on the front, until he is caught in a bomb blast, and sent back to England, wounded and shell-shocked. He spends seven months in hospital recuperating from acute physical and emotional trauma.

His doctor believes in the rehabilitating powers of upland air and belonging to a small, tightly-knit community. These requirements lead to

the suggestion of teaching as a possible profession for David, and he finds the image an appealing one.

> David Powlett-Jones, white hope of the Pontnewydd Elementary School, the miner's son who had won the first local scholarship to the Grammar School at thirteen, and had gone on to win another for university four years later, began to see himself, a little fancifully, as an usher on a rostrum, writing on a blackboard in front of an audience of boys. (p. 16)

The doctor arranges an interview for a position at Bamfylde School. David is honest with Reverend Herries, the headmaster. He tells him that he has no formal teacher training, and no experience. He admits that he has not yet recovered from his war experiences, that he has doubts about whether he could even cope with the job, and that he only agreed to the interview at the insistence of his doctor. Herries is impressed with David's directness, he is sympathetic to an injured veteran, and teachers are in short supply because of the war. He offers him the position almost immediately. David accepts, after some reflection and misgivings.

> He thought, "It's what I need, I daresay, but how the devil do I know I could stand up to it? If any one of those kids tried it on, as boys always do with a new man, I might go berserk. Or I might crumple up and pipe my eye. . . (p. 24)

He is expressing here the fear of what has been understood to be the kiss of death for a teacher--letting students know that they "got to you." A teacher has to be strong and unemotional, and David is not sure that he has sufficiently recovered from his war experiences to remain in control of his emotions no matter how students might try him.

The most important factor in his decision to take the job in spite of his doubts is that he instinctively likes and trusts Algernon Herries. His intuition proves reliable, and Herries becomes in David's mind a substitute for his father. He soon decides that he wants to model his own teaching after the headmaster, and asks him to define his philosophy of education. "'How do you see it, Sir? Education, I mean, the real purpose of it? In all

that time you must have formed some conclusions.'" Herries' response is seen through the course of the novel to be one of the primary influences on the construction of David's image of himself as teacher. "'How? Well, certainly not as a matter of hammering information into boys. . . . I don't really regard myself as a schoolmaster, or not any longer. . . . I suppose I see myself as a kind of potter at the wheel.'" His explanation of the metaphor communicates two essential messages to David. The first is that the responsibility for the quality of the finished product rests entirely with the teacher--he or she is an artisan who decides what will be made out of inanimate materials. The second is the hierarchy of desirable qualities in these finished works of art.

> "They learn a little tolerance, I hope, and how to see a joke against themselves, and how to stand on their own feet. But, above all, the knack of co-operating. I'm not too insistent on scholarship. Scholars are dull dogs for the most part." (p. 27)

Social development and integration are more highly valued than other attributes such as individuality, creativity, self-expression, or learning.

David's impression of Herries as a man that he can like and trust is the main reason that he agrees to accept the job at Bamfylde. The reasons that he stays on, and that he never doubts that he has made the right decision, are also emotional rather than intellectual. He finds the people and the atmosphere at Bamfylde to be a source of comfort, security, and healing that would be impossible to find elsewhere. The insularity of the school makes his war experiences seem part of another life, the hectic pace and the high spirits of the boys keep him from brooding, and the rhythm of the school year is predictable and soothing. He tells Beth soon after they meet that he considers himself far luckier than many other veterans.

> "Not only coming through more or less intact, but having something to take my mind off it when I was discharged. . . . I got a Blighty, in the autumn of 1917, and started teaching as soon as I was boarded. It's amazing how it helped. The war already seems something that happened when I was a kid." (p. 76)

Other aspects of his life, including his two wives and his children, are important to him, but he does not need them in the same way that he needs what teaching can give him. All three of the women in his life understand this. Beth becomes the perfect housemaster's wife, helping him and smoothing the way for him in whatever ways she can. Julia Darbyshire refuses to marry him, saying that she is not cut out to be a self-effacing wife in the male dominated world of a boarding school, and that she knows that she will begin to hate both him and the school because of his single-minded devotion to it. Christine Forster, although she agrees to marry him, has a hard time accepting the role of helper and second fiddle. At one point she runs away, but he finds her and persuades her to come back. It is only when she takes on the task of teaching a class of the youngest students, and begins to feel useful and needed in her own right that she is able to adjust to the fact that she will never be as important to him as the school is, or as he is to her.

Although David loves teaching, and wouldn't give it up, he expresses distaste at being associated with the generic label of teacher. He interrupts himself when he is talking to Beth, and finds himself giving her an enthusiastic and impromptu history lesson.

> She listened attentively and it reminded him that he was becoming as didactic as old Judy Cordwainer and he broke off, saying, "Look here, that's enough of that. I'm beginning to talk like a schoolmaster off duty and that's a sobering thought."
>
> "Why? After all, you are one."
>
> "I don't care to be recognized as one wherever I go. You'd see what I mean if you met some of the codgers in our common room," and that, he thought dolefully, was unlikely. (p. 82)

He realizes that marriage to a teacher will not be a very attractive proposition for many women. He discovers that his friend Howarth is a lonely old bachelor because the girl he was in love with chose to marry a stock-broker rather than a teacher. Howarth maintains that he doesn't blame her; that the miserable pay, lack of opportunity for advancement,

and the arrival of a new family every four or five years make the job more suitable for a bachelor than a married man. David hesitates to propose to Beth because of the kind of life he would be asking her to share.

> "What the hell have I got to offer a girl like her? Two hundred a year, Mam to help out, and a life removed from everyone but boys and old trouts, who would tut-tut at the powder she dabs on her nose!" and he recalled the opinion expressed by Howarth under the fives court on Armistice night, concerning the unwisdom of trying to combine marriage with a job requiring so much dedication and monastic seclusion. (p. 82)

He also realizes that being a teacher imposes some constraints on his private life that another occupation would not. It is understood that he must demonstrate impeccable morals and good judgement in public. This becomes an issue when he makes a speech at a public rally endorsing Christine Forster, who is at that time a Labor Party candidate, and is the cause of one of his rows with Alcock, the headmaster who replaces Herries. All three of the women he becomes seriously interested in understand that they will have a responsibility to be seen as above reproach in everything they do.

Early in the novel, the narrator describes David's nervousness on his second morning at Bamfylde when he has his first class with the lower fourth form, "that final refuge of extravagent humorists, who regarded any new tutor, especially an inexperienced one, as legitimate prey, a blind and bumbling bear, to be baited and tested for sharpness of tooth and claw" (p. 30). This incident is intended to illustrate that David is a natural teacher. With no experience, no training, and no time spent observing other teachers, he walks into the classroom and immediately takes charge of a particularly difficult group of thirteen and fourteen-year-old boys. He faces the first challenge to his authority by reacting quickly and decisively when a high-spirited student puts him to the test, pretending to have an epileptic seizure, and throwing the class into confusion.

> He took a chance then. He had nothing but instinct to tell him that Boyer's seizure was a well-rehearsed trick on the part of the lower fourth to relieve the tedium of an hour devoted to De Silva, Walsingham and the Dutch. He roared, at the top of his voice, *"Silence! Places!"* and the command at least had the effect of dispersing the crowd about Boyer's desk, giving him the first real chance to weigh the probabilities. Then Dobson rallied but again, a mere amateur alongside Boyer, he overplayed, saying, in an aggrieved voice, "I was only trying to *help*, sir. . .!" and that did it. Colour returned to Boyer's face and he sat upright, blinking and looking confused, a traveller who has awakened in a train to discover he has passed his station. And in a sense he had for David descending from the rostrum, and moving down the center aisle, scented victory in the hush that fell in the class as he said, quietly but menacingly, "Stand *up*, Boyer! You too, Dobson!", and both boys raised themselves, looking, David thought, surprised and vaguely apprehensive. He said, in the same level tone, "*Quite* a performance! But it needs working on Boyer! You're not too bad but your partner is a terrible ham," and the astonished laugh, heavier and more sustained than the obligatory response to a master's quip, set the seal on his triumph. (p. 32-33).

After this display of composure and quick thinking, David seizes the opportunity to solidify his position by warning the boys that although it may be his second day of teaching in a school, he has had experience teaching recruits how to deal with the opposition. "Think about that, because the opposition, from here on, is *you* " (p. 33). Once he has their attention, and has convinced them that he is not a man to be bested by a class of thirteen-year-olds, he goes on to win them over by promising that they will be studying more recent history. He starts a lively discussion by asking the students what they know about the causes of the present war; by the end of the class period, David is satisfied that he has passed the crucial test, and has proven himself to be a teacher. He is not intimidated

by students, and is able to think quickly under pressure and move into an offensive position, but he is not malicious or mean-spirited. He maintains his sense of humor, allows the boys to keep their self-respect, and doesn't hold a grudge. The important thing is that the boys now know, and will not forget, who has won and who is in charge of the classroom.

David's first reaction to meeting the Bamfylde teaching staff is not complimentary. "They were not a very likeable bunch but one had, David assumed, to make allowances" since they were either older men, or men classified as unfit for service; with the exception of David, one other master, and two female teachers (p. 39). The older men were "petrified in the Victorian mould;" stodgy, unsmiling sticklers for rules and routine. The ones who had been excused from serving were "almost pitiable" because they felt themselves inadequate to assume a position of authority over students who had fathers, brothers, and uncles at the front.

> There was one among this latter group who was teetering on the edge of a nervous breakdown, Meredith, a twenty-five-year-old diabetic, with a sallow complexion and huge defenceless eyes. Meredith's classes, David learned, usually ended in a riot, and he was said to stand on the rostrum and let the tide of ribaldry sweep over him, bleating, "I say there . . . I say, you fellows . . . !" Beyond that he would make no protest. (p. 39)

Meredith is presented as an example of the kind of person who is entirely unsuited to teaching. The boys sense his weakness, and he is unable to control his classes. Herries tries to help by suggesting that Meredith take a cane into class, but that simply incites the boys to wilder antics, and increases the chaos. David mentions off-handedly and unsympathetically, a short while later, that Meredith has been dismissed.

The teachers David describes are all colorful and interesting, but he does not find them approachable or friendly. Herries suggests that the isolation that David feels is a natural result of his age and his war service, and that his role among them will be unique. He tells David that he expects him to help both the students and the older teachers to bridge the gap

between the pre and post-war world, thus affirming David's image of himself as a special and more enlightened teacher than the rest of the staff. He does revise his judgement about the other teachers somewhat as he gets to know them and realizes that they are tradition-bound, inflexible and idiosyncratic, but also sincere, caring and endearing. He becomes very fond of several of them, and in particular of Howarth, the crusty, sarcastic English teacher.

David is allowed a fair amount of latitude to teach according to his own convictions and values. When he expresses his anti-war sentiments and his socialist tendencies in the classroom, it shocks some of the teachers, but Herries is not alarmed or critical.

> "You've frightened one or two of the old stagers, I'm told. Oh, don't let that bother you. It never did me. If you can't smuggle your own convictions into the curriculum you might as well go away somewhere, dig a hole, and live in it." (p. 52)

David sees himself as a free thinker and a revolutionary influence in the school. When he complains about the narrowness of the curriculum and the out-of-date textbooks, Herries tells him that he is "rushing his fences" a little bit, but suggests that David make up a proposed syllabus with recommended textbooks for the following term. He also pushes the younger teacher to articulate exactly what it is that he would like to see in a history program. David's response helps him to formulate the ideas that will remain central to his teaching throughout his career.

> "I think we should have different textbooks for different ages," he said. "The subject needs to be introduced with colour--Alfred's cakes, Bruce's spider and so on, but it ought to progress from there without getting dull."
>
> "What's your prescription?"
>
> "To catch the interest in lower school with the legends, move on to a more solid diet in middle school, and then use half the periods for free discussion in the Fifth and Sixth. Especially the Fifth, when they're coming up to School Certificate and

> Matric. Discussion promotes original thought, doesn't it? And I believe examiners like originality, even when it reads like heresy." (p. 52-3)

The boys seem to respond to his unorthodox methods, such as the mnemonic jingles that he invents to help them remember important battles, the sequence of succession of kings, and the names of Henry VIII's wives. He believes that his approach can be justified as more than just a bid for popularity.

> The broad effect of his free-ranging and highly-improvised methods, had more important results, however, introducing a fruity generality into his periods, and enabling a class to break free of the cast of history text-books and cruise down what he thought of as the mainstream of time. (p. 122)

He does not believe that history can be compartmentalized, or viewed as a series of unrelated facts, just as he does not believe that any subject can be taught in isolation.

> He was still inclined to be a drifter in class and the boys knew it, and took shameless advantage of it, but that didn't bother him overmuch. He had never seen any specific subject as water-tight, so that his English had often spilled over into history, geography, and even divinity, and sometimes, when the bell went, he would again remind himself he had learned more than he had imparted. (p. 573-4)

Possibly more basic to his philosophy than the conviction that learning history doesn't need to be dull is David's belief in developing the whole boy, not just the mind. Beth tells David that she notices a conflict between his ideas and those of some of the other teachers. "You believe in real education, in letting boys develop their individuality, but Carter and some of the others don't. They're only interested in exam results. There's a conflict there" (p. 107). When David asks Herries why he has been chosen as housemaster over teachers with more seniority, Herries explains that it

has more to do with the kind of man David is than his specific teaching skills or accumulated knowledge.

> "You're a born teacher, and I don't mean by that a man with the knack of imparting information. . . . I've never been a great advocate of exams, or dedicated scholarship, or even technical education, You know that. Everybody knows it. I've always been more interested in turning out well-adjusted human beings and I imagine you go along with that." (p. 162)

David definitely sees his role as much broader than dispensing historical information. He acts as a surrogate parent, especially to the "sundowners," boys whose families are out of the country, and who consequently remain at the school through most holidays, rarely seeing their parents. He frequently assumes the role of therapist to the boys, performing this function with amazing success. He knows instinctively how to solve the problems of a boy whose father has been killed at the front, a lonely outsider who tries to commit suicide, two bedwetters who are being ostracized, several boys struggling with their parents' divorce, and many others with assorted problems and crises.

In David's view, his responsibilty to provide for the boys a role model of a man of strength, courage and integrity is even more important than his teaching and therapeutic skills. When a fire breaks out in the school, he rushes unhesitatingly to the rescue of two boys who are trapped on the roof. He takes a stand against Alcock, the new headmaster who takes over on Herries' retirement, when he believes that students and staff are being treated unfairly. Late in the novel, when David is headmaster and past forty, the courage, quick thinking and fierce determination of five boys save another boy from drowning in a bog. David sees the narrow escape as a failing on his part, because he is no longer fast enough or strong enough to save them himself. He tells Christine, his wife at this point, that if it had been left to him, they would be dead. She argues that he is forgetting that it is his contribution to forming the character of the five heroic students that indirectly saved Driscoe's life. His selflessness, sense of justice, human

compassion, and exemplary moral fibre have more to do with his success and popularity at Bamfylde than anything he deliberately teaches.

David's image of himself as a radical and a dissident undergoes some changes during the years covered in the novel. His idealism never gives way to cynicism or pragmatism, but he does develop a new awareness of the value of tradition and structure. In a discussion with Julia Darbyshire, a woman who was on staff at Bamfylde for a short while, and whom he meets again and falls in love with some time later, David states that he agrees with Matthew Arnold's definition of education as a search for truth; "To see things and ourselves as they and we really are, not as fashionable trends and fashions project them, generation by generation" (p. 251). This search for truth, he says, must begin with self-knowledge, which requires self-discipline. Furthermore, he argues, self-discipline requires a system.

> That's why professionals have to lean heavily on a system, symbolized by that bell you hated. There's got to be a system, an organization, a chain of command. Like the army, the church, or any well-run business, come to that. And you have to work within that system, even though its far from perfect and needs adjustment all the time. (p. 251)

This discussion reveals why David has been able to fit into life at Bamfylde with so few problems or misgivings.

Once he is appointed headmaster, David becomes even more oblivious than he had previously been to anything in the outside world that does not immediately affect his school.

> After that a streak of parochialism that had been broadening within him ever since he had been absorbed into Bamfylde, began to spread until the men he had once jested about, stick-in-the-muds like Judy Cordwainer and Rapper Gibbs, became in a sense his prototypes. The overall effect upon him was curious. His personality both narrowed and deepened. (p. 449)

He becomes even more convinced of the importance of what he is doing, and satisfied that he is doing it well. His conviction deepens that the job he

does at Bamfylde will help to determine whether the country is able to find its way out of the serious economic and political difficulties it is experiencing. He has been able to update the curriculum to his satisfaction, and he is turning out the kind of young men that he believes the country needs.

Unlike Beth, who fitted in as naturally as if she had been born there, Christine expresses some misgivings about the system of education represented by Bamfylde. She does not believe that nine and ten-year-olds should be sent away from home to live at boarding schools at all, and that the heavy emphasis on games and school rituals tends to de-emphasize the importance of learning. She also believes that the school should take some responsibility, in a worsening economic climate, of ensuring that it turns out students with some skills that will suit them for a more competitive job market. David listens to her, and acts on a few of her suggestions. He puts her in charge of a class composed of the younger students which becomes known as "the cradle," and adds typing, bookkeeping and accounting courses to the traditional program. He doesn't, however, accept the basic premise of her argument, that the school is losing touch with a changing world, and that he has lost his desire to change the status quo. Christine understands at this point that David has changed. "Clearly he was now a fervid convert to tradition and equally clearly she was not and never would be" (p. 524). He does not recognize any significant problems either with his conception of the mandate of the school, or his job as a teacher.

The novel shows events coming full circle, and the conclusion finds David hiring a young man who has just been discharged from hospital after being wounded in the second world war. He makes up his mind about the boy almost immediately, based on the fact that Earnshaw reminds David so much of himself at the same age, and offers him the job, saying to himself as he does so, "I daresay he is wondering what the hell he has let himself in for but he'll soon find out, and live to thank his stars maybe, as I did once, but had stopped doing lately. . . ." (p. 637).

David would summarize by saying that he has led a happy and extraordinarily fortunate life. He has had sorrowful moments, but their impact is diminished by setting them among so many stories of joys and triumphs. It seems that this is the intended message in his story. David views teaching as a career that can help to keep life in perspective, as when he is revived by the sympathy and thoughtfulness of his students after Beth and one of his twin daughters are killed in a car accident. He is not a man that spends much time worrying about what cannot be changed, or what he cannot do. Rather, he focuses throughout on his successes and the good things that happen to him. He is usually able to get along by being good-natured, but when the occasion calls for it, he can be tough and assertive. Herries, the original headmaster of the school, lets him teach with very little interference. When David believes that Herries' successor is destroying the happy atmosphere of the school, he stands up to him unflinchingly and takes his complaints to Bamfylde's board of governors. We have no doubt that had Alcock not died of a heart attack first, David would have succeeded in convincing the board to get rid of him. He has faith in himself and a firm belief in his convictions and values, and the established order in the school is very close to the way he would do things himself. This basic agreement between who he believes he is and who those around him believe he is, his expectations of himself and the expectations of the job, makes the conflicts that do arise in his life and in his teaching manageable.

To Serve Them All My Days is a pleasant if highly romanticized view of teaching. We can feel the narrator's nostalgia for a time that has passed and a life that was simple and rewarding, even if this life exists only in his memory. Possibly because of Delderfield's technique, which makes me feel like I am looking at David's very hazy, distant past with the aid of yellowed photographs, the novel suggests the trick that time has of smoothing out and softening the rough edges of experience. The novel captures one common vision of teaching that is just as distorting and misleading as another that focuses only on its frustrations and difficulties.

Bread Upon The Waters: Irwin Shaw (1981)

Irwin Shaw's novel, Bread Upon the Waters, the most contemporary of the novels considered for this study, also looks at the life of a teacher in a more detached and objective way than the others do. Shaw has created a character, Allen Strand, who is a teacher, but the novel does not attempt to portray the details of the day to day business of teaching. What Shaw does is to describe how Allen's life has unfolded to this point, examining the complex and reciprocal relationships among the kind of young man Allen was at twenty, his choice of occupations, the decisions he makes, and the kind of man he is thirty years later. We watch Allen Strand as he reacts and adapts to traumatic changes in his life, and arrives at a new understanding of himself, his family, his career and the world around him.

Allen is fifty years old, and has been teaching history in the New York Public School System for twenty-seven years. He doesn't seem either to actively like or dislike his work. He accepts it as something that he does to earn a living for his family, and finds it predictable and not overly stressful. When we are first introduced to him on a Friday afternoon in May, he is a man with no immediate problems. He loves his wife and his children very much, is looking forward to their Friday evening together, and is well satisfied with his life. Walking home, he is relishing the thought of two days with no planning to do or test papers to mark, and imagining how the children he teaches are spending their free time. "At the moment they were hooting at games in playgrounds or experimenting with sex on tenement rooftops or hidden in hallways smoking marijuana or filling syringes with heroin. . . ." (p. 4). He passes by the tennis courts to watch his tall, athletic youngest daughter play. He is proud of seventeen-year-old Caroline, and can't help congratulating himself. "No marijuana or heroin for her, he thought complacently, generously pitying less fortunate parents" (p. 5). He is serene and confident that his marriage is secure and that Caroline and his other two children--Jimmy, eighteen, and Eleanor, twenty-two--are well-adjusted and happy.

Although he is content with his life, the point is clearly made, and underscored on several separate occasions in the first few pages, that Strand is not proud of either the prestige or the paycheque he earns as a teacher. We are told that his salary, along with his wife Leslie's income from private piano lessons and a part-time position teaching music, manage to keep the family comfortably, if not in luxury, but that Allen's salary alone would not. "Without Leslie's help, in the face of ever-rising rents, they could never have kept the old rambling apartment, with its spacious, other-age rooms and high ceilings" (p. 7-8). He also knows that his parents-in-law have always been disappointed in their daughter's choice of a husband. Allen met Leslie when she was a student and he a teacher in the same high school. He was attracted to her immediately, but kept an ethical distance until he felt it was more appropriate.

> He had waited until she was graduated, had taken careful note of her address, had called on her and to the dismay of her parents, who considered his choice of teaching in a public school a mark of predestined lifelong failure, he had married her after her first year at Juilliard. The parents had changed their minds a little by the time Eleanor was born, but not much." (p. 9)

His sensitivity about money is re-stated when we are introduced to Eleanor, who is bright, ambitious, and very focused on building her career. She finished college and immediately found an excellent job with a large computer firm, which is disconcerting for Allen.

> When she got her job and told her father what her salary was, he congratulated her, a little ruefully, since, fresh out of college, she was making more than he was after twenty-seven years in the public school system. (p. 16)

Strand shows his embarassment about being introduced as a teacher most clearly when Russell Hazen--a man whom Caroline rescues the same Friday evening, as he is being mugged in Central Park, and brings home to be patched up--asks him what his profession is.

> "My profession--" He cleared his throat. "I struggle with the bloodthirsty instincts of the younger generation," Strand said, purposely vague. He had decided that Hazen was an important man, more from his manner than from anything he said, and that he would have much the same estimate of him Leslie's father had if Strand said he merely taught in a high school. (p. 33)

Leslie interrupts and tells Hazen without any hesitation that her husband is a teacher and chairman of the history department at River High. Hazen responds, with apparent sincerity, that he wanted to be a teacher, but that at the insistence of his father, he took a law degree. He is now an extremely wealthy and influential lawyer.

Strand sums up his feelings about his career when commiserating with Judith Quinlan, a friend and English teacher in the same school, about their long, hard day and the merits of staying in the profession. "Well, there are certain things we can safely say in favor of our profession," Strand said. "It is underpaid, arduous, unappreciated, dangerous from time to time, and we have long holidays. We can also go on strike, just like the garbage collectors" (p. 60). She comments that he is showing the effects of his day. "'You look as though you're about to come to a slow boil. Has it ever occurred to you that you're not really cut out to be a teacher?'" He tells her that he will have to consider her question, and when she apologizes and says that she shouldn't have asked it, his response reveals some fresh doubts. "'Why not? Recently I've been asking it myself.' He didn't tell quite how recently it had been--since Saturday morning. 'I'm of two minds. There's an answer for you'" (p. 60). After only one weekend, his acquaintance with Russell Hazen is already beginning to have an effect on his thinking.

Up to this point, Allen does not seem to have had any complaints about his career serious enough to make him consider giving it up. After twenty-seven years he is jaded, and has no idealistic or romantic notions about changing the world, but he seems to have come to terms with it as a means of earning a living, and feels that he is fairly successful at it. He is

fully aware that the students he teaches are growing up in more difficult times than he did, that they lead more complicated lives, that they are forced to grow up much sooner, and that the future for them holds very little promise. This attitude is reflected in his idle speculations about how his students are spending the weekend, quoted above, and also in the first conversation in the novel between Leslie and Allen, regarding a boy that Caroline seems to be getting friendly with. Strand half-seriously maligns young people universally, and implies that Leslie's positive appraisal of the boy is naive. He tells her "'If you had to do battle with the kids I see five days a week, you might change your attitude about the innocent young'" (p. 12). When she counters by saying that she has often asked him to request a transfer to a more civilized school, his response is insincere and clichéd, but good-natured.

> "Tell that to the Board of Education," Strand said, picking up another cookie. "As far as they're concerned, there are no civilized schools. Anyway, I like the challenge. Anybody can teach history at St. Paul or Exeter." He wasn't quite sure that this was true, but it sounded convincing. (p. 12)

He has accepted that his life will never be extraordinary in any way, and seems to feel no resentment or anxiety at the thought of continuing along just as he is indefinitely.

He doesn't see himself as a reformer or an unconventional teacher. One of his students, Jesus Romero, has read extensively, writes brilliantly, has a very keen and original mind, and possesses an unusual ability to cut to the heart of an argument. However, Allen doesn't credit Romero's abilities to anything that the school system, or he as a teacher, have done. He respects the boy' intelligence, appreciates the stimulation of his fresh and irreverent arguments, and is frustrated that he will likely never go to college or use his abilities to get ahead. Allen tells Hazen "He's confided in me that education is bunk, too. Still, a boy like that once in a while makes you feel it's all worthwhile" (p. 35).

He feels no responsibility to encourage Romero, or to look for new ways to help him reach his potential, and doesn't question the efficacy of his traditional teaching methods. Instead, he is annoyed when Romero discounts them. "He delights in provoking me. When I lecture, following the curriculum, as I have to do, he often just gets up and walks out of the room" (p. 51). He tells another teacher that Hazen introduces him to that the Vietnam War is not a topic for discussion in his classes, because modern history is not included in the currriculum. At this point, he gives no indication of having thought very much about why he approaches his history classes the way he does, or what he personally believes that they should be doing. He has absorbed his methods and his ideas about teaching from the existing system, and does not think of them as problematic.

When he permits himself to think about how much the world has changed since he was young, and how much conditions seem to him to have deteriorated in New York, and in the country, he is dismayed. However, he doesn't believe that he, or the educational system in general, have any real power to change anything, or to help the young people he works with. Talking to Hazen about Romero, he expresses his view of most students at River High. "He's just about like the other students in the school. That is to say he's scornful of authority, immune to discipline, suspicious of the intentions of his teachers. . . " (p. 51). The lawyer doesn't challenge the truth of what Allen is saying, but he does challenge his acceptance of this truth as carved in stone. Hazen expresses his strong conviction that education does have the power to shape the future positively, while Strand reveals his apathetic and fatalistic attitude.

> "I can imagine the difficulties," Hazen said. He shook his head. "Still, we can't just wash our hands of the whole thing, can we?"
>
> Strand wasn't sure just which "we" Hazen meant and by what process he, Allen Strand, might be included in the plural.
>
> . . . "We can't just abandon a whole generation or a good part of a whole generation to nihilism--that's the only word for

> it--nihilism," Hazen said, an oratorical gravity in his voice. "The best of them have to be saved--and I don't care where they come from, the slums, farms, great estates, ghettos, anywhere, This country is in for some terrible times and if our leaders are going to be ignorant, uneducated, we are heading for catastrophe."
>
> Strand wondered if Hazen was voicing long-held beliefs or had suddenly seen some handwriting on the wall that had been hidden from him before his scalp had been opened by a piece of pipe [the mugging in Central Park]. He, himself, involved in the daily struggle with the young, found it more comfortable not to look too far ahead, and he felt that the present state of the nation could hardly be worsened, regardless of the education or lack of it of its leaders. (p. 52)

Strand has accepted that his students' world has been shaped by social, geographic and historical forces over which he has no control, and that his responsibility for them begins and ends with teaching them a few historical facts and helping to perpetuate the existing system. What they do or do not do with the information he gives them, and with their lives, is up to them.

Allen did not always imagine himself spending his working years as a public school teacher. If his life had worked out according to his early dreams, it would have been quite different. He did not have visions of himself as an explorer of new worlds or a conquering hero, but he did aspire to study at a good university, and to become a published and well-respected historian, until events determined otherwise.

> When he was young he had hoped to make his name as a historian, but when his father died during Strand's last year in college, leaving behind him a derelict appliance repair shop and an ailing wife and a pitifully small amount of insurance, Strand had to give up whatever plans he had for continuing in graduate school. The next best thing, he made himself believe, was to get a license to teach history in high school, where he would at least

> be working in a field he was devoted to and could make a living for himself and his mother at the same time. By the time his mother died he was already married and Eleanor had been born, so now he read history and taught it but did not write it. If he had his moments of regret, he had his compensating moments of contentment. (p. 44).

The accidental introduction of Russell Hazen into their cozy little family circle sets in motion a chain of events that will change all of their lives drastically and irrevocably. Hazen is a very wealthy, charming and lonely man who likes the Strand family immediately, and refuses to thank them politely and pass out of their lives after their chance encounter. As he is saying good-bye after their first meeting, he tells Allen "' I must tell you something that perhaps I shouldn't say--I envy you your family, sir. Beyond all measure'" (p. 39-40). His own family has disappointed him deeply, and has fairly recently fallen apart. He and his wife are in the midst of a spiteful divorce; his two daughters are spoiled, lazy, and unable to sustain relationships or earn a living; and five months previous to Caroline's rescue in the park, his son committed suicide with a drug overdose.

Hazen's interest in the Strand family, and his generosity on their behalf, seem to be limitless. He goes out of his way to find opportunities to talk with each of them, and to encourage confidences. He then uses his extensive connections, his influence and his money to obtain for each of them what he has determined that they want the most. Allen realizes almost immediately that Hazen's intervention in their lives makes him uncomfortable, but he cannot fully understand or articulate his misgivings. He believes that they might simply be the result of selfishness and jealousy on his part at not being able to do all the things himself that Hazen is doing for his family.

Hazen invites the Strands to spend a weekend at his ocean-front house in East Hampton. They agree, and they all appreciate his hospitality and the unaccustomed luxuries of his affluent lifestyle, but the weekend

begins an irreversible process of stripping away Allen's illusions, and forcing him to look at his life more objectively. Hazen takes this opportunity to talk to Allen about Caroline's future. Caroline is graduating from high school, and her parents have assumed that she would continue to live at home and attend a local college. Hazen tells Allen that Caroline mentioned to him that she would like to go out west to study at an agricultural college, and eventually become a veterinarian, but that she hasn't mentioned it to her father or mother because she knows that her family doesn't have the money. Hazen has a friend on the board of Truscott College, an agricultural college in Arizona, and he believes Caroline is a good enough runner to qualify for an athletic scholarship. He asks Allen if he would like him to call his friend and arrange to have a representative of the athletics department come out to see Caroline.

When Strand asks Eleanor what she thinks about her sister going away to College, she tells him that she believes that Caroline is immature for her age, very insecure, and convinced that she is ugly because of what she sees as a disfiguringly large nose, which comes as a surprise to Allen. It is her opinion they would be better to keep Caroline at home where they can look after her for a while longer. Eleanor also introduces Allen to Giuseppe Gianelli, a young man whom he and Leslie have never met, but that she is obviously seriously involved with. She tells them that they have known each other for a year, and that they are planning to take a two-week vacation in Greece together.

Taken together, these revelations seriously upset Allen's peace of mind, threaten some basic assumptions about his family, and begin to uncover unrecognized tensions and resentments between himself and Leslie. By Saturday night, Allen is so upset that he is impotent for the first time in their twenty-three years of marriage, and by Sunday night, they are no longer speaking to each other. He feels unable to broach what is bothering him, and she is angry because she feels shut out.

Back at school on Monday, Allen tries to explain his confused feelings to Judith Quinlan.

> "I'm afraid that my pride was hurt. That I was being left out of the decision-making process, that I wasn't capable of taking care of my own child--somehow Hazen, the whole weekend--made me feel like a loser. . . " (p. 109)

He finds himself confiding more than he would have wished to Judith, and before he goes home he has been invited, and very strongly tempted, to be unfaithful to his wife. He does not accept Judith's invitation, however. He goes home, shares his concerns with Leslie, and discovers that she is not particularly shocked or even surprised by his discoveries about their daughters. They talk to Caroline, and she is so enthusiastic about Hazen's plan that they decide to let her go to Truscott if it can be arranged.

Very soon after they meet, Hazen also suggests an alternative to the direction of Strand's own career.

> "Have you ever thought of getting out of the public school system? It must be dispiriting, to say the least--year after year. Perhaps teaching somewhere out of the city, in a small private school, where the rewards, anyway intellectually, would be more commensurate with the effort you put in?" (p. 52)

Allen tells him that he has considered it, and that Leslie talks about it occasionally, but that he was born in New York, he likes the city, and that he is a little old to make a new beginning. Hazen lets the subject drop temporarily, but the reader already knows Hazen well enough to realize that he does not offer suggestions lightly.

He does not introduce the idea again until after the Strands' second momentous visit to the house in East Hampton three weeks later. This time, Allen gets caught in an undertow while swimming in the ocean alone. He comes very close to drowning before he is rescued by Hazen's assistant, and the exertion and fright bring on a massive heart attack. Hazen looks after Allen, his family, and his medical expenses, and refuses to let him go back to his apartment in the city to recuperate when he is released from hospital. After Allen has sufficiently recovered, Hazen repeats his suggestion that Allen should find an easier job. He tells him that he has

some influence with the headmaster of Dunberry, a small private school in Connecticut that has been generously endowed by his family, and that he could arrange an interview for Allen. In fact, he has already spoken to Babcock, the headmaster, and his visit to Hazen's house to interview Allen is merely a formality. Hazen has also spoken to Leslie and persuaded her that it would be a good idea before he mentions it to Allen. The plan seems too opportune and sensible to resist, and the matter is settled, although Allen does wish bitterly that he was in good enough physical and financial shape that he could afford to disregard the offer.

> When Hazen left the room he allowed himself the luxury of the sigh that he had suppressed while the man was there. He would have to think about the rest of his life, Hazen had said. Among other things that meant money. Always and persistently--money. He had known what was happening to him was expensive, but for the first time in more than thirty years he had not asked what anything cost. But soon the bill would be presented and it would have to be paid. He sighed again. (p. 153-4)

He doesn't believe that Hazen is consciously manipulating him or putting him in an uncomfortable position with his generosity, but he does know that his benefactor has very high expectations of people around him, and that he is uncompromising and unforgiving when they disappoint him.

Hazen not only finds a much less demanding job for Allen, but also sees that Leslie is offered the opportunity to teach a music appreciation course at Dunberry. He gives her a station wagon so that she can travel to New York once a week and continue to teach some of her piano students. Before the new school term at Dunberry, he takes Allen and Leslie to France for a vacation while he does some business. While they are there, they get the news that Giuseppe and Eleanor are married and that they have both given up their jobs in New York and moved to Georgia to take over the publication of a small newspaper. This also happens at Hazen's instigation. He knows that Giuseppe wants to quit his father's business and set himself up publishing a small paper. He knows the owner of a

newspaper in Graham, Georgia who is looking for somebody with a small amount of money to invest and who can take over the daily operation of the paper. He mentions this to Guiseppe, and before Allen and Leslie know anything about it, the couple have left for Georgia. At the same time, Hazen introduces Jimmy to Herb Solomon, a record producer who offers him a job with his business. Jimmy has been hoping to make a career in the music industry, and at nineteen, and with no experience, this seems to him like a better chance than he could have hoped for.

Hazen leaves nothing alone if he believes it needs fixing, and it is within his power to fix it. Just before they arrive back from France, Caroline has her nose broken resisting the advances of a boy she dated who became excessively ardent and demanding, and her doctor says that she will require surgery to enable her to breathe properly. Hazen sees it as a chance to take care of another problem for her, and arranges for a plastic surgeon to alter the shape of her nose at the same time. Caroline is thrilled with the results, and sets off for Truscott with new confidence and pride in her appearance.

He does one more thing before the school term at Dunberry starts, and that is to offer to handle the tuition fee and other expenses for Romero, if he wants to to enrol at the school. Strand's comments about the boy's potential and his poor prospects in a public school piqued Hazen's interest, and made him decide that it was up to him to point Romero in a different direction. He asks Strand to speak to the boy, and he does, but with no apparent success. Romero is at first suspicious and unreceptive to the idea. When Strand tells him to consult his parents, Romero says that he hasn't seen his father since he was nine years old, and that his mother would beat him for making up stories. Strand loses patience with the boy's objections, and tells him that he doesn't care what he decides, although this is obviously not true. His irritation reveals that he would very much like to see Romero accept the offer, whether or not his words do.

"Then consult with yourself, Romero," Strand said angrily. He stood up. "If you decide you want to make something of

> yourself, come and tell me. If you want to be a bum all your life, forget it." He collected some papers and stuffed them into his briefcase. "I've got a lot of work to do at home. I have to leave. I'm sure you have many important things to do yourself this afternoon," he said sardonically, "and I won't keep you any longer. . . . Get out of here, get out of here," Strand said and then was ashamed because he had spoken so loudly. (p. 59)

Romero does accept, but not until Hazen talks to him and repeats the invitation personally. He buys the boy a new wardrobe and sends him off to Dunberry, with instructions to Allen to keep a close watch on him.

Both Allen and Romero initially seem to adapt very well to their new lives. Romero makes a good friend in Rollins, a gentle, good-natured black football player, and discovers that his speed, quick reflexes, and agility make him an asset to the football team in spite of his small size. He impresses his teachers with the quality of his thinking, although they do wish that he would keep some of his controversial opinions to himself. Miss Collins, who teaches English, tells Strand that Romero has a photographic memory and can quote verbatim whole paragraphs from books to support his arguments. When given the reading list for the semester, he told her that he had already read most of the books on the list, and those that he hadn't weren't worth his time. She says that she finds him a very difficult student to handle, mostly because he threatens her status as the final authority in the clasroom, and that she wishes there were a more advanced course he could transfer to. "'I'd put him right into it. I'm afraid he's some sort of genius. I never had one before and I never want to have one again'" (p. 250). Romero is tolerated, but not encouraged to pursue his original ideas or to develop his talents. His purpose in being there as far as Hazen, Strand, and the other Dunberry teachers are concerned, is to pass exams with high enough grades to get into a decent college. Strand is relieved that he doesn't have Romero in his class, at least in the first term.

Allen settles in well too. His classes are smaller than they were at River High, the students are more amenable, the headmaster is a decent, kind man, and the atmosphere in the school is relaxed, not confrontational.

> Already so early in the term, Strand had felt how easily and calmly the school was run, how discipline was kept with very little constraint. There was an easygoing friendliness between the boys and the faculty that provided an invigorating climate for the process of teaching and learning and Strand was rediscovering some of the sense of hope that he had in his early years as a teacher. (p. 245).

It seems that the "invigorating climate" that Allen talks about stems from the fact that the students are all from wealthy families who see the monetary, if not the intellectual, value of an education, and who are paying large tuition fees. This means that students and their parents are for the most part much more focused on getting good grades than they were in Strand's classes in New York. He has almost no problems with discipline, and when he does they are very easily handled. He can lecture in the same manner as he did at River High without interruption, and even stir up some enthusiasm in the boys.

In Allen's classist and racist perception, the boys at Dunberry are not only more compliant because of their learned system of values, but their upbringing and ancestry have actually endowed them with a different and more sophisticated kind of intelligence. Comparing Willoughby, one of his Dunberry students, to Romero, Allen suggests that the two boys are by birth and breeding quite different.

> He is as keen and intelligent as Romero, but with a sense of order and proportion that may come from his Virginian inheritance or some lucky twist of genes that permits him to grasp abstract ideas and the sweep of history without effort." (p. 436)

Allen finds it more satisfying to teach at Dunberry because the students for the most part do not resist his idea of what teaching and learning should be. He is the expert, imparting dates, facts, and his interpretation of the

importance of historical events, and the boys willingly accept his expertise and his authority.

Allen is aware that Leslie is not happy with their new life. She misses the city, feels lost and claustrophobic surrounded by 400 boys all day long, and isn't enjoying teaching music appreciation. However, things go fairly smoothly until Thanksgiving. The Strand's spend the holiday with Hazen, and return just in time to see Romero chasing another boy out of the house where Allen, Leslie, and nine students live, and cut him with a knife. Romero is taken to jail and expelled from Dunberry immediately, although he claims that the other boy, who is much bigger, has stolen some love letters and a great deal of money from Romero's room, and refused to return any of it.

Strand feels that Romero is wrong, and acted foolishly, but that he was using the only way he knew to get his possessions back. He is sorry about his part in the decision to transplant the boy into a foreign environment, where none of the rules that he learned in his old neighborhood apply. Hazen, on the other hand, washes his hands of the boy, refusing to put up the bail money to get him out of jail while he is waiting for a trial, and also lets Strand know that he believes he is at least partially to blame for the incident.

> "That kid deserves to have the book thrown at him, if only for ingratitude. I hate to say this, Allen, but I'm afraid you've been a little remiss in disciplining that boy and at least making sure he couldn't get his hands on any weapons" (p. 321).

Strand is offended, and cannot accept Hazen's criticism as just, but when Hazen asks him to lie to the FBI, telling them that he was with Hazen at a time that he wasn't in order to protect Hazen from prosecution for using his influence to manipulate government legislators, Strand makes it clear that he has not sold himself, and has no intention of telling anything but the truth if he is asked.

Immediately after the incident with Romero, Leslie finds that she can no longer cope with the strain, and leaves Allen and her job to go to

that he has not sold himself, and has no intention of telling anything but the truth if he is asked.

Immediately after the incident with Romero, Leslie finds that she can no longer cope with the strain, and leaves Allen and her job to go to France as the guest of one of Hazen's rich female friends. She takes a renewed and enthusiastic interest in painting, which is a talent she has neglected for many years, and finds that she is successful. Her paintings begin to sell, and when she comes home for Christmas, she tells Allen that she wants to stay in France for an indefinite period, and suggests that they ask Hazen if he could get Allen a job on the staff of the American school in Paris.

Allen is considering all of this while they are guests in Hazen's house for the Christmas vacation. This holiday proves to be a turning point for all of them. Caroline has come home from Truscott chastened and very embarassed, because her new face and her new confidence have gotten her a reputation as a tease and a flirt, and she has become seriously involved with a married professor who has left his wife and wants to marry her. Allen finally has a long and honest conversation with her, and begins to understand her. Eleanor has left Giuseppe because their paper is failing, and he has put their lives in danger by exposing wholesale corruption among the top-level politicians and business people in Graham, Georgia. He refuses to leave, spending his nights sitting up in the dark with a loaded shotgun on his lap. Jimmy has become involved with a much older, drug and alcohol-addicted woman who has been a successful singer, but is quickly burning out and destroying her career. Still only nineteen, he quits his job with Herb Solomon, and betrays him by taking clients away so that he can start his own business. He becomes involved with Solomon's wife, who asks her husband for a divorce so that she can marry Jimmy.

Three days after Christmas, Hazen commits suicide because of the exposure of his corrupt dealings, the loss of his reputation, and his despair over his personal life. Soon after that, Leslie goes back to France to paint. A chastened Caroline refuses to go back to Truscott, instead enrolling in a

child development course at Hunter College in New York, and working part-time as a waitress to help support herself. Eleanor decides that her place is with her husband, and goes back to Georgia to await the outcome of events. Their paper is eventually burned down, and they take the insurance money and what they have learned about the newspaper business to another small town, this time in Florida, and start a successful paper. Romero has been released on a year's probation, but he is not allowed back at Dunberry.

Allen considers going with Leslie and accepting a teaching position in Paris, but decides against it. He goes back to Dunberry by himself with many new ideas to consider. He enjoys his job there, finds it relatively easy, and at least some of his students, like Rollins, appreciate what he is doing. He tells Allen that having him for a teacher has made a difference.

> "Mr. Strand, this place needs more people like you, that's for fair. I never told this to any teacher before, but I enjoy your classes and I'd be lying if I said I wasn't learning something I think is important for me in them. A lot more important than blocking and tackling and you can tell the coach I said so." (p. 325)

Allen, however, discovers that he likes teaching, and begins to realize that what he has been doing at Dunberry is not teaching. He becomes conscious of a desire to make a difference, and the knowledge that he is needed much more in New York by students like Romero than by ones like Willoughby at Dunberry, who are likely to have decent futures ahead of them regardless of whether he is there or not.

Romero is an important influence in helping him to make this decision. He refuses to play on anybody's sympathy or beg to be allowed to remain at Dunberry while on probation, choosing instead to make a dignified and silent exit. He tells Allen that he thinks they are more alike than Allen may admit, even to himself.

> He started toward the door, then stopped and turned. "Can I say something, Mr. Strand?"
>
> "If you think there's anything more to say."

"There is. I'm leaving here, but I don't think you'll be here much longer, either." He was speaking earnestly, his voice low and clear. "This place is staffed by time-servers, Mr. Strand. And I don't think you're a time-server."

"Thank you," Strand said ironically.

"The other teachers are grazing animals, Mr. Strand. They graze in peace on grass. . . "

Strand wondered where in his reading Romero had picked up that phrase. Unwillingly, now that he had heard it, he recognized its justice.

"You hunt on cement, Mr. Strand," Romero went on. "That's why you understood me. Or at least half understood me. Everybody else here looks at me as though I belong in a zoo." . . .

"Go get your things," Strand said. He was disturbed and did not want to hear more. At least not today. (p. 345)

Whether or not Romero's comments appear to be a fair appraisal of Allen as a teacher or not, he does take what Romero says very seriously. Later, when he tries to express sympathy for the boy, Romero tells him that his pity is misplaced, and indicates his disappointment in Allen.

"Romero," Strand said, "you're a lost soul."

"I was born a lost soul," Romero said, stopping. "At least I didn't go out and lose mine on purpose. I'll tell you the truth, Mr. Strand--I like you. Only we got nothing to say to each other that makes any sense any more. Not one word. You better go in now." (p. 418)

The shocks that Allen experiences during these nine months come together and cause Allen to form a completely new picture of who he is, and who his wife and children are. He begins to understand them when he is forced to pay attention to them in a new way. In the past, his family have conspired to allow him to live with his comfortable fabrications, but beginning with Hazen's intervention, they begin to share more openly what they are experiencing and feeling as a result of all the changes they

are undergoing. Hazen is manipulative and self-serving in his solicitous attention, but he does force them all to make some real and important decisions. As a result of his interference, they reconstruct themselves and begin to make some conscious decisions about how to relate to each other based on real information.

One of the most important readjustments to Strand's understanding of himself is his new conception of what it means to him to teach. He comes to see himself as willing and able to help inner-city students in the struggle to build good lives, rather than accepting that their fate is out of his hands. He realizes that it is not the content that he can manage to make them remember for exams that is the measure of his competence as a teacher and as a man, but whether or not he can help them in their search for themselves. By the time he makes the decision that he will call the school board in New York the next day, and goes to bed, he is once again a reasonably happy man, optimistically looking forward to real success as a teacher. At this point, however, his happiness is based on a much more realistic view of himself, the people around him, his life, and his future than when we met him the previous spring.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusions And Implications For Teaching

In this study, so far, I have examined seven novels individually in which the protagonist is a teacher and in which the characterization and the plot are in some way directly connected to the character's occupation. I have attempted to uncover some of the invisible and taken-for-granted notions that they display about their identity as teachers, in an attempt to show that many of the assumptions about how teachers should behave in classrooms are founded on tradition and unexamined expectations, not on consciously examined or formulated conceptions or philosophies of teaching. Some of the teachers in the novels accept these expectations without ever questioning or attempting to understand them, and some of them recognize at least some of them as problematic, and can be seen struggling to understand, accept, or reject them. They all demonstrate the influence of these beliefs in some way.

The fictional teachers I have looked at are Lucy Snowe in Villette, Anna Vorontosov in Spinster, George Caldwell in The Centaur, Rachel Cameron in A Jest Of God, Rick Dadier in The Blackboard Jungle, David Powlett-Jones in To Serve Them All My Days, and Allen Strand in Bread Upon The Waters. These seven novels are very different in tone, style, plot, setting, and time frame. Each one is an artist's unique conception of a character and a situation, and each creates a world peopled with characters that could not be easily transposed into the world of any one of the other novels. It would be ludicrous to try to imagine David Powlett-Jones at North Manual Trades High, or Lucy Snowe in Manawaka, Manitoba. There are also, however, a great many commonalities, and taken together, they create a striking composite image of what these authors collectively believe about how teachers think and behave. In this section, I will attempt to synthesize

what I have found to be some of the most important messages about teachers and teaching that come out of these novels.

Why did the protagonists in these novels become teachers?

Contrary to one notion that appears regularly in reading and discussions about teachers, none of the seven characters that I looked at closely is shown to have chosen teaching as a deliberate and first choice of careers. Lucy Snowe (Villette) ends up teaching because the pay and the prestige it offers are better than that of a nursery attendant, and also because it allows her to retain her independence. The Count de Bassompierre offers her three times her teaching salary to act as companion to Paulina; and although Lucy is fond of both Paulina and her father, she says no, and tells the reader that even if her prospects were desperate, her answer would have been the same. She knows that she does not have a strong presence of her own, and she is terrified of disappearing entirely if she were to take on the role of companion to somebody like Paulina. Teaching is at the moment the option that offers the most acceptable compromise between Lucy's need for enough money to support herself on the one hand, and her need to protect her sense of self on the other. The central concern of the novel is Lucy's struggle to convince herself that she really does exist for others, and her identity as a teacher helps to affirm this. Her job guarantees that Madame Beck, M. Paul, and her students will recognize her presence and that she will be listened to, at least in the classroom, while as Polly's paid companion, she would give up the right to speak to anybody about herself or for herself.

Anna Vorontosov (Spinster) does not tell us why she chose teaching, but it seems that she must have had a strong desire to get as far away as possible from painful memories of her childhood and her parents, and away from Eugene, the man she loved and who had hurt her. In the time during which the novel is set, which is some time shortly after World War

II, teaching would still have been one of the few acceptable and readily available careers for women who were of necessity self-supporting. Another probable reason that Anna has taken up teaching is that for a good part of the day it allows her to avoid having to deal with other adults, adult men in particular. She feels most relaxed and comfortable sitting on her low chair, holding a child.

> I have a refuge after all, I realize: other people's children. There is a stability in the boy body against mine which I have lost in my own, and communion in the up-gazing eyes. This borrowing from a body so small! Ah, this secret that mothers have never told! Gradually the horror, expelled from the crater of me, smokes away to nothing, while, with this boy in my arms, I forget I am a spinster and a teacher and am only woman. (Spinster, p. 101-2)

Around other adults she always feels like an imposter, nervous and self-conscious, as if she is pretending to be grown up, and waiting for somebody to see through her disguise. She is never quite sure if her words or actions will seem appropriate. She has no idea what to expect from other adults or how to conduct adult relationships. She is stuck in her own childhood, and it is only among her Little Ones that she can be spontaneous and real. She is a child among other children, so she knows what they need and expect from each other. The children that she protects, comforts, and nurtures are all herself in different guises.

Rachel Cameron (A Jest Of God) displays many of these same characteristics. When Willard Siddley sends her a note asking her to please go to his office, her reaction is not that of one adult being asked to consult with another. "I feel I'm being summoned like a naughty child" (A Jest of God p. 49). Like Anna, she is not ready to participate fully in the adult world, and uses the classroom and her children as a way of hanging on to her own childhood and escaping adult interactions. At the same time, they both imagine themselves as grown-up women with children of their own. Rachel has the same strong desire for a child of her own that Anna does, and the same jealousy toward all mothers. Rachel, however, keeps a

distance between herself and her students that Anna does not. She watches them playing from her classroom window, and imagines herself as a young girl skipping rope with them. She needs to objectify and separate herself from the young girl who wants so badly to please and to be accepted, so that she can at least pretend to be an adult.

Anna's image of herself and the children afloat on alternately stormy and benign seas in a fragile dinghy is repeated in Rachel's description of her students trooping two by two into the ark. In each case, the classroom is seen as inaccessible to other adults, much like a youngsters' tree-house that is posted off-limits to non-members. Both Anna and Rachel see themselves as responsible for the children, but also as children among the group. Rachel reacts like a jealous and hurt little child when James refuses to acknowledge her, striking out at him for rejecting her overtures of friendship. Anna's reaction to Mr. Abercrombie's appearance in her pre-fab is much the same as Rachel's reaction to finding Willard Siddley bending over her desk as she enters her classroom. In both cases the adult is an intruder, and the situation is doubly discomfitting because the intruder is male.

The stories that Rachel, George Caldwell (The Centaur), and Allen Strand (Bread Upon The Waters) tell about how they came to teaching are so similar as to be almost interchangeable. For all three, the futures they had envisioned died along with their fathers, who left behind them no money or insurance, dependent wives, and failing businesses. Rachel doesn't tell us what she had intended to do, but she does say that she wasn't able to finish her university degree, and felt obligated to return to Manawaka to be with her mother. Manawaka is a very small town with limited employment opportunities, and teaching in the local school was something that Rachel would have been considered qualified to do.

George wanted to be a pharmacist, but says that he didn't believe he was smart enough, and his father's death and George's enlistment in the armed services during World War I interrupted his education. He worked at various jobs to support himself and his mother for several years after the

war, until he managed to put himself through college. He graduated with distinction, and obtained a degree in chemistry. He worked for the Bell Telephone and Telegraph company as a cable splicer until 1931, when he lost his job because of the depression. By that time, he was married and jobs were difficult to find. When he was offered a teaching position in Olinger, he accepted, and is still teaching there eighteen years later when we first meet him.

Allen had dreams of studying history and making a career as a historian until his father died, putting an end to his plans to continue in graduate school. Getting a license to teach history seemed like the next best thing, and a sensible thing to do. All three recognized teaching as one way to use the education that they did have to earn a living, and embraced it as a solution to their immediate difficulties. None of the three would have described her-or-himself as having warm or outgoing natures, or as feeling any aptitude or desire for the give and take of relationships required by a job that involves daily interaction with a large number of people.

Rick Dadier (The Blackboard Jungle) and David Powlett-Jones (To Serve Them All My Days) were also pushed by circumstances into teaching, rather than making an active and positive choice of a career. David was wounded in the First World War, and advised by his doctor to take up teaching in a quiet, secluded residential school because it would be good for his nerves. Rick is also a veteran (we don't know for sure whether he served in the Second World War or the Korean War) and obtains his emergency license to teach in a vocational school through a special post-war program for veterans. The novel is rather ambiguous about Rick's decision to teach. He tells Mr. Stanley in his initial interview for the position that he attended Hunter College and studied teaching because it was a good opportunity offered to veterans. Later, the author gives us access to an internal monologue in which Rick seems to get carried away trying to impress himself with his dedication and says that he really wanted to teach. This may be done to illustrate Rick's tendency toward self-

aggrandizement, and the fact that no matter what he would have chosen to do, he is narcissistic enough that he would need to see himself as the very best at it, and his motives as absolutely above reproach.

The choice to become a teacher turned out very differently for each of them, and, with the possible exception of Rick, it was not a life that they anticipated or planned for while they were growing up. In fact, they all admit to some degree of surprise at finding themselves behind the teacher's desk, and for only one of the seven does it turn out to be a happy surprise.

How do they perceive this choice as affecting their social status?

Four of the seven teachers--Lucy, George, David, and Allen--clearly recognize the choice of teaching as a decision to accept a relatively low status in society. Anna, Rachel, and Rick don't indicate clearly how they perceive their standing in the community. Some of these teachers believed that they had no choice but to accept what they see as a demeaning position; some understood that they would be accepting a lesser status, but chose it because of compensating benefits; and some show no evidence of having considered the prestige, salary, or social standing of teachers compared to the general population very much at all.

Lucy definitely sees the role of teacher as a socially marginal one. She knows that she would likely have been ignored by people like the Brettons and the de Bassompierres, except that they had some connection with her while her family was still alive, and did not meet her first as a teacher. Because of this, they feel sorry for her rather than ignoring her. At the same time, for Lucy, the position of teacher is a move up from companion and nursery attendant. She pretends to misunderstand Ginevra Fanshawe's question when she asks Lucy, "'But *are* you anybody?'" by which she means to ask if Lucy has some mysterious family connections that allow a schoolteacher, a non-person, to associate with people who are obviously well above her in station. Lucy answers proudly and truthfully,

"'Yes, I said, 'I am a rising character: once an old lady's companion, then a nursery-governess, now a school-teacher'" (Villette, p. 394). She has come up in life since she found herself alone and destitute, but she is still not on the level she would have been had her family remained intact. Lucy herself is not ashamed of being a teacher, and will not hide the fact, but she does say that there are people who depend on social position and connections for their self-respect, and who therefore are debased and become less respectable as people when they have none. She congratulates herself on being able to appreciate and remember her own value even when the rest of the world doesn't. She practices a kind of reverse snobbery, judging people like Ginevra Fanshawe, Count Alfred de Hamal, and their friends the Cholmondeleys just as harshly and discounting them as readily because of their status as they do her because of her lack of it.

George suffers over the fact that for his family's sake, he would like to have the status, possessions, and money that teaching does not provide. He had done many other things before he accepted a teaching job, and in his own estimation, failed at them all. He resents the fact that he is indebted to Al Hummel, the local mechanic and his wife's cousin, for getting him his teaching job in Olinger. He repeatedly tells his wife that she would have been far better off to have married anybody else, or even to have pursued a career on the burlesque stage, and tells Peter just as often how unlucky he is to have been stuck with a teacher for a father instead of somebody who could give him the good things in life. He tells a destitute hitchhiker how much he envies his life, and apologizes to a panhandling drunk because he has only thirty-five cents to give him. "'I'd like to give you more, my friend, but I just don't have it. This is my last thirty-five cents. I'm a public school teacher and our pay scale is way behind that of industry'" (The Centaur, p. 159).

David does not see teaching as a step down for himself, since his father was a poor Welsh miner before his death when David was fifteen, and since then, the family has struggled along with even less. The social standing and the salary of a teacher is not an issue for him when he is

alone, but he does hesitate to ask Beth to marry him, since his career will not provide the kind of life that he believes a woman would find attractive. Ian Howarth, his closest friend at Bamfylde, has never married because the one woman he asked could not see herself accepting the privations of the life of a schoolmaster, and married a well-to-do stockbroker instead. David's life at Bamfylde is simple and spartan, and his money never stretches far enough. Algernon Herries' wedding gift to him when he does marry is the installation of indoor plumbing in the little cottage he rents from the school. He does not resent the lack of money, comfort, and prestige, however. He simply sees it as a fact, not as a cause for distress. Life at Bamfylde offers compensations that money can't buy. He does hate to admit publicly that he is a teacher, though, believing that this knowledge will cause people to assume that he is stuffy, boring and pedantic as well as poor.

Like George and David, Allen finds that there is enough money to provide for only a very simple lifestyle. It is a more pressing concern for him than for the other two men, however, because he and his family are living in New York in the nineteen-seventies, and inflation is steadily eroding the buying power of the little income that he does have, and making his pension worth less and less. He likes the fact that in many ways his life is less complicated because he gave up his dreams of professional recognition for the quiet, simple life of a teacher. Most of the time he thinks that the trade was a fair one, but he does have occasional regrets about not being more financially secure, and is slightly ashamed to admit what he does for a living. These feelings are greatly magnified after he meets Russell Hazen, who gives Allen and his family their first glimpse of what life would be like if they were wealthy. Meeting and spending time with Hazen forces him to examine his values more closely. He admits to Judith Quinlan that being around a rich, successful, powerful man like Hazen, who can do things for Allen's family with a snap of his fingers that Allen could never hope to do, makes him feel like a failure and destroys his self-esteem. He discovers that the luxuries and the freedom from practical

concerns that money can buy are more important to him than he had formerly believed.

Anna, Rachel, and Rick, from the information given in the novels, haven't consciously concerned themselves with their status as teachers in the larger community, focusing their attention instead on other problems. Rachel believes that spinster schoolteachers are looked on as strange and eccentric, and is convinced that people are inclined to view her with pity or contempt, but this is because she has not managed to attract a husband and have children of her own, not because she is a teacher. The issue of status and the hierarchical structure of Manawakan society is an important one in the novel, but these concerns are centered around family and ethnicity, not occupation. Nick Kazlik is of humble Ukrainian descent. His family was considered by the community to be inferior to the residents of Scottish heritage, like Rachel's family, and she wasn't allowed to associate with children like Nick when she was growing up. He finishes high school, attends university, and becomes a high-school teacher, which surprises Rachel's mother, and raises him considerably in the estimation of the residents of Manawaka.

Rachel feels that her role creates an artificial distance between herself and the parents of her students, and that no matter how well they know her, they treat her with a mixture of fear and respect when she is relating to them as a teacher to a parent. She has the impression that Grace Doherty has dressed very carefully for a meeting with Rachel about her son James, and that she is nervous, and wonders why.

> Why has she found it necessary to get dressed up like this? An interview with the teacher? But the teacher is Rachel Cameron, whom she's known all her life. Is it possible that she doesn't think of it like this, and is edgy herself, wondering what I will have to say about James? (A Jest of God, p. 54)

There is no mention that Rachel is embarrassed by her profession, even though it was not her first choice, but this might have more to do with the fact that she is a woman, for whom teaching has always been considered an

appropriate career choice and a reasonable aspiration, given that the first choice of marriage and a family was not offered.

Like Rachel, Anna does not explicitly tell us what her thoughts are about how she is perceived by the community. She is also more worried about being a spinster than about being a teacher, and she dislikes married women, particularly mothers, on principle. She does feel that she has some influence with parents, particularly with the Maori parents. Rauhuia, the Maori chairman of the school committee, respects her and has entrusted his grandson to her care. However, Anna's field of perception is very narrow, encompassing little more than her day to day struggles in the classroom, and her relationships with Mr. Reardon, Paul Vercoe, other teachers, inspectors and school officials. She is very concerned about her position in relation to other infant mistresses, and within the hierarchy of the educational system, but people not directly involved in her small world seem to hardly exist for her. It doesn't seem likely that she would spare the time or energy to worry about how she is perceived by the community at large.

She believes that her work is valuable and important, and never mentions how she feels about the salary or lifestyle, except to express her humiliation at finding that she has not received a raise in grade or pay as a result of her two most recent evaluations. Her humiliation has nothing to do with the money itself, and everything to do with the implied judgment of her competence. The one other concern that she does express about money is that for some time she has been unsuccessfully trying to put some away for a trip that she periodically dreams of taking, back to her country of birth and away from inspectors and teaching. She is upset when she snags her nylons maneuvering across the crowded room while still under the influence of her morning brandy;

> which means another fifteen-and-six, which has a relation to my freedom when I come to think about it. Fifteen-and-six less for my ticket. Fifteen-and-six-further away from that boat steaming

> out through the Wellington heads. Fifteen-and-six more of this bell. . . hell or whatever I mean. (Spinster, p. 8)

Like Anna, Rick appears to be too caught up in trying to make sense of the world of teaching to look further afield and think about his place in the larger social structure. We know nothing at all about his family or his life before he was discharged from the Navy, so we have no way of knowing how his occupation compares to his early dreams, or whether for him it is a move up or a move down. He projects very recognizably white, upper-middle-class attitudes and values, and considers himself both intellectually and morally superior to anybody else in the school, but he doesn't indicate that he believes he has demeaned himself by becoming a teacher. The only direct comments that he makes are bitterly derogatory ones directed at the educational system and the large majority of teachers. He looks around him and wants to know who to hold responsible for the abysmal ignorance of the students in his classes. Is it the educational theorists, the teacher-education colleges, the boards of education, or the low salaries and status given to members of the profession that should be condemned?

> Or do you condemn the meatheads all over the world who drift into the teaching profession, drift into it because it offers a certain amount of paycheck-every-month security, vacation-every-summer luxury, or a certain amount of power, or a certain easy road when the other more difficult roads are so full of ruts? (The Blackboard Jungle, p. 134).

He sanctimoniously stresses the differences between himself and the other future teachers at Hunter College.

> Oh, he'd seen the meatheads, all right, he'd seen them in every education class he'd ever attended. The simpering female idiots who smiled and agreed with the instructor, . . . [and] the men who sometimes seemed a little embarrassed over having chosen the easy road, the road to security, the men who sometimes made a joke about the women, not realizing they

themselves were poured from the same steaming cauldron of horse manure. Had Rick been one of those men? He did not believe so.

He had wanted to teach, had honestly wanted to teach. He had not considered the security, or the two-month vacation, or the short hours. He had simply wanted to teach, and he had considered teaching a worth-while profession. He had, in fact, considered it the worthiest profession. . . . He had given it all his enthusiasm, and he had sometimes felt deeply ashamed of his classmates, often visualizing them in teaching positions, and the thought had made his flesh crawl. (The Blackboard Jungle, p. 134-5)

In spite of his scathing portrait of teachers as a species, Rick does believe that teaching is an edifying and noble thing to do, if done for the right reasons and in the right way.

How do they perceive the role?

I. What images or metaphors do they associate with themselves as teachers?

The images and metaphors that these teachers use are personal and revealing expressions of how they think and feel about themselves and their work. One of the most immediately noticeable things about them is that so many of them are constructed starting with the idea that an essential part of the job of a teacher is to establish absolute control in the classroom, and that this will inevitably create antagonism between teacher and students.

Lucy and David describe their very first teaching encounters in remarkably similar terms. For both of them, the classroom is a battlefield, the students are the enemy, and the campaign for control of the disputed territory, the classroom, is fought with grim determination on both sides.

The teacher in both cases wins by using the tactic of quickly identifying the leader of the enemy troops, and moving in swiftly and ruthlessly for the kill. They both believe that the outcome of this first battle will very likely be crucial in deciding whether or not they will have a future in teaching. David could be speaking for both himself and Lucy when he says that although his tactics were questionable, he does not regret what he had to do. "It was well below the belt. He was aware of that but he didn't care. It was a crossroads in his life, and victory was essential." (To Serve Them All My Days, p. 33)

Rick faces much the same kind of a test, although the battle for control in his classroom is not described in military terms. Instead, the scene is described with the aid of images from old Hollywood gangster movies. Rick is an actor, and his performance has to convince an audience of young hoods that they can't mess with him and win. Rick's tough-guy act plays well, as far as he is concerned, and the students conclude that it would not be healthy for them to push him too far. Again, there is one leader, and one do-or-die test of the teacher's courage and resolve. By making this student back down, Rick discourages the rest from putting him to the test, although in his case, his act does not permanently settle the issue. He just manages to establish a very precarious control over his classes for the rest of the term, while Lucy and David find that once they have demonstrated that they can think more quickly than the students, and will be merciless in imposing their will, they encounter no further serious opposition.

Rachel also sees her position as imposing her will on students who are naturally resistant to doing what they are told, even though the children in her class are only seven and eight years old. She becomes involved in a fierce struggle of wills when she asks James Doherty to let her see the page of addition questions that he is supposed to be working on, and he refuses. She realizes that she made a mistake in demanding that he show her, but once she has, she can't rescind her order. She believes that her position in the classroom requires that she seem infallible. To appear

hesitant, retreat from a confrontation, or admit that she was wrong, would in her mind be an invitation for her students to pounce on her. "If I capitulate, they will fall upon me like falcons." (A Jest Of God, p. 59) She must appear decisive and confident, even when she is feeling painfully indecisive, guilty and insecure.

Lucy, David, Rick, and Rachel all describe the tremendous effort of will it takes to control their fear and to hide their true feelings in order to convince students that they are calm, unafraid, and entitled to instant obedience. Madame Beck leads Lucy to the threshold of the classroom, and Lucy stops there to collect herself before she opens the door.

> When we reached the carré, a large square hall between the dwelling-house and the pensionnat, she paused, dropped my hand, faced, and scrutinized me. I was flushed and tremulous from head to foot; tell it not in Gath, I believe I was crying. (Villette, p. 140)

She succeeds in hiding any trace of her nervousness from her pupils, as does David, who has nothing but his intuition to tell him that the boy who mimics an epileptic seizure is acting. He is aware that he might be making a very serious mistake, and he knows it, but he decides quickly to counter-attack, hide his uncertainty, and pretend to be absolutely sure about what is happening. Rick faces down a student who challenges him by walking to the student's desk and doing his best tough-guy impression, telling him to sit down and to take his hat off before he knocks it off. As he utters this command, it is of the utmost importance that he conceal even the slightest involuntary indication of weakness or fear.

> He did not know what the reaction would be, and he was vaguely aware of a persistent fear that crawled up his spine and into his cranium. He knew he could be jumped by all of them in this single instant, and the knowledge made him taut and tense, and in that short instant before the boy reacted, he found himself moving his toes inside his shoes to relieve the tension, to keep it

from breaking out in the form of a trembling hand or a ticcing face. (The Blackboard Jungle, p. 66-7)

Rachel remains outwardly calm and self-possessed when she realizes that she has just struck James across the face with her ruler, totally belying her inner horror and bewilderment at her inexcusably violent reaction.

Crack!

What is it? What's happened?

The ruler. From his nose, the thin blood river traces its course down to his mouth. I can't have. I can't have done it. Slowly, because a reason for all things must be found, I take the unresisting page between my fingers and force myself to look at it. (A Jest Of God, p. 59)

One truth that they are all shown to accept without question is that in their role as teacher, they cannot afford to be as spontaneous, friendly, or even as reasonable as they are naturally inclined to be. A teacher will not be able to teach if he or she doesn't first instill fear and awe.

Allen is not shown in any confrontations with students, although it is mentioned that the students at Dunberry are much more inclined to sit still, listen, and do what they are told without protest than the students at River High. It is never stated explicitly, but Allen's image of himself as teacher very clearly involves complete control over classroom activities. He lectures, gives exams, and tells students what to do. In his case, there doesn't seem to be much conflict with students, because after twenty-seven years, he has learned all the tricks and gone through the trials that Lucy, David, and Rick describe, and has reached the stage where he can impose the kind of control he assumes is necessary without too much effort. He talks about the importance of covering the mandated curriculum, and the necessity of lecturing to get the required information across to students, which assumes that he already had achieved the status that Rick, Lucy, and David fight for. His control is an established fact, and is now a non-issue, which allows him to teach.

Lucy and David both indicate that once the battle is over, and they have established themselves as the winner, the students hold no grudge; in fact, the students appear to them to be immediately more respectful, friendly, and even appreciative. Boyer, the cut-up who fakes a seizure in David's class, stands up at once and apologizes to David for his behavior, and the students who knew and co-operated with the disruption readily admit their part in it. They all accept the heavy assignment that David hands out as punishment with good grace, and within minutes the class is involved in an interesting lesson. The image of the teacher as benevolent dictator obviously has a very long history, and is very deeply ingrained.

George has none of the abilities of the three teachers mentioned above to dissemble, and in his own opinion, this is his greatest failing as a teacher. When Deifendorf tells George that he likes him, George argues, although not very convincingly, that he wants his students to fear him, not to like him, because he believes that fear is an acknowledged sign of a successful teacher.

> "That's my trouble, Deifendorf. That's the worst thing can happen to a public school teacher. I don't *want* you to like me. All I want from you is to sit still under me for fifty-five minutes a day five days a week. When you walk into my room, Deifendorf, I want you to be stiff with fear. Caldwell the kid-killer; that's how I want you to think of me. *Brrouh!* " (The Centaur, p. 103)

He protests that he doesn't, but he likes and cares for his students, and is not willing or able to be inflexible enough to force them to sit still and listen for fifty-five minutes. He wants students to cooperate and to learn because they are as excited about science as he is, and although he believes that the role of teacher requires that he enforce blind obedience, and that a teacher shouldn't need or want students to like him, he doesn't truly want this kind of a remote, impersonal relationship.

George imagines himself as a teacher like the mythical centaur, Chiron, who commands love, respect, and obedience because of his wisdom and experience, and because his own needs and interests and those of his

students are in harmony. He doesn't see himself as having created this kind of mutuality of purpose with his students, and he doesn't meet the official requirements of a good teacher who makes students sit still and memorize facts for exams. He feels lost and alienated, not measuring up to either his own ideal image or the given, public image that he believes other people judge him against.

Anna is caught in much the same way as George is, although she doesn't place any of the blame for her difficulties on her students, and she doesn't feel that they are antagonistic toward her. If people would leave her alone and just let her teach, she and her students would get along with very few difficulties, as she doesn't hesitate to tell Paul Vercoe when he punishes one of her Little Ones for disobedience in the schoolyard. "'I'm only just beginning to bring that Tamati baby round to understanding what obedience is. To thrash him undoes my work!'" (Spinster, p. 17) By and large, her students are fond of her and look to her as the final authority in the classroom. She can handle even very troubled and hostile Little Ones like Seven (the Tamati baby mentioned above) with patience and understanding, defusing his anger by listening to him, holding him, and helping him to explore where it is coming from. She makes a very clear distinction in her mind between her image of herself as overseer of a vitalizing and chaotic mixture of activities and other infant mistresses who stand in front of neat, straight rows of desks with a yardstick in hand, talking to students who are silent and obedient, but also repressed, bored and resentful.

In order for her students to thrive in the classroom, Anna believes that they need a stimulating environment full of talking, laughing, crying, singing, painting, music, movement and physical contact, along with the traditional three R's. Her job as a teacher is to orchestrate all of this activity, not to stand in front of the students and give them orders. There is some primal and over-arching force that urges the energy of children toward growth and development, and it is her function to help to channel this energy creatively, not to interfere with it or block it by

insisting that the children do only certain activities at certain times, ignoring their body clocks and natural developmental rhythms. Like George, she cannot accept the school system's criteria for good teaching, and feels herself obliged to stretch and sometimes ignore the approved curriculum, but she also cares very much that she cannot change the opinion of the inspectors and other school officials who do not approve of her methods. She is as confused as George is about the contradictions between her image of the "proper" teacher, and the image that she has of herself. She feels very strongly that her own unique image should take precedence, but at the same time she lacks confidence in herself, and assumes that if so many people believe differently, she must be mistaken, and discredits the evidence that is all around her in the classroom.

Another aspect of the image that these teachers hold of themselves is that of the teacher as expert. Lucy, David, Rachel, Allen and George all seem to understand that an essential characteristic of teachers is that they are the experts in the classroom. A large part of their function as teachers is to pass on their accumulated store of knowledge to students. It is not surprising when Lucy Snowe voices this belief; but even though a large body of research, thinking, and writing about pedagogy came out of the first few decades of this century, the teachers in these five novels still seem to think about learning as if the word were a noun, a name for a neat little package that can be delivered to children.

David attempts to make his lessons interesting, and does what he can to update the curriculum and make it more relevant. The study of history, however, is not something that students engage in to find meaning for themselves; it is the memorization of facts for the purpose of passing examinations. He uses games and memory-enhancing tricks to make it slightly less painful, but his function is to know more than his students, and to be able to pass it on. In his first semester at Bamfylde, he teaches the second and third-form English classes, but when he is planning for the new term, Herries tells him that he won't need to teach anything except his area of specialization, which is history. "'I'll get someone else to take the

lower school in English. It won't be Howarth [the English master], of course. He likes his subject too much to reach down.'" (To Serve Them All My Days, p. 53) David says that it is difficult to stay ahead of the class, and that he has to "mug up" on the material himself so that he doesn't look foolish, but that he would like to continue doing it because he is finding it useful and enjoyable to become re-acquainted with the literature so that he can teach it.

Once the boys are older, and he has drilled the required facts and attitudes into them, he can safely begin to give them some latitude, allowing them to discuss and to think for themselves.

> This was particularly true in the Sixth, where he was able to step outside his tutorial role and move among them as a kind of group leader, appointed by popular ballot. (p. 553)

His wife Christine notices, however, after sitting in on a discussion in his sixth-form class, that in matters of fact, and even in matters of opinion, his word on any topic being discussed is still accepted as final, and that just before the end of the class, every boy in the room turns to him for his summation. She tells him that the position of undisputed authority that he has earned, and his students' belief in his omniscience, are the true marks of a succcessful teacher, and he accepts her comment as affirmation that he has reached a desired and hard-earned goal.

> "Now if you told them the moon was made of blue cheese, they'd accept is as gospel, and that's victory, Davy. You're coming down the straight now, whether you realise it or not," but he said, seriously, "It's a damned long straight." (p. 554)

The highest praise she can give David as a teacher is that his students have learned to accept his word on blind faith, rather than examining and questioning various ideas and forming their own conclusions.

Allen demonstrates the same belief that the test of a teacher is how much he or she knows, and the skill with which this knowledge is communicated to students, not what students can discover and the sense that they make out of it. He cannot help but admire Jesus Romero, a student

with a strong reading background and opinions of his own, but he repeatedly points out how difficult an intelligent, creative student makes life for a teacher. Romero interferes with his teachers' ability to do what they are paid to do, which is to lecture and dispense the information dictated by the curriculum, and help students to remember it long enough to pass the required exams and obtain a high school degree.

Allen congratulates himself on having the good luck not to have Romero in his class at Dunberry, because his presence is threatening to a teacher who believes that his job is to know the right and the politically correct answer to any question that arises in his history class, not to encourage original or controversial viewpoints. Romero brings up ideas that Allen had not thought of himself, and raises questions that have no final answer in the textbook, such as whether the Civil War was a necessary and good thing, or a needless waste of human lives, because simple economics would have eventually determined the same outcome without bloodshed. When Allen finds out that Romero has been reading Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and asks what he thought of it, he is impressed and also dismayed by Romero's critique.

> Two centuries before the shit hit the fan he [Gibbon] was really writing about the English Empire, where the sun never set, whether he knew it or not, and the fat-ass bastard Americans and it made me realize that when the time comes I'm going to be one of the Goths. (Bread Upon The Waters, p. 230)

Allen responds, not to the content, but to the wisdom of expressing thoughts like these, at least in school. "'My advice to you, Romero,' he said, 'is to keep ideas like that to yourself when you have to write essays in your history classes'" (p. 230). Allen believes that the boy's brilliant but nonconformist and radical ideas will hold him back and guarantee that he will never go to a good college or get a good job, and are thus obstructions to a teacher's primary objective.

George also wants his students to receive what he knows about science, and to become excited about the same things. He does not have the ability to make students sit still and listen to him, but he does show that he has the required knowledge base. The report that Zimmerman files evaluating George's teaching confirms what George already believes, pointing out that the students were unprepared and unruly, but that George did display one important quality. "The teacher's knowledge of his subject matter seemed good and some of his illustrations relating subject matter to his students' everyday lives were effective" (The Centaur, p. 110). Chiron is shown as possessing an immortal lifetime of knowledge and wisdom, which makes him a figure of reverence to his students. There is a similarity between the descriptions of Chiron's students listening in hushed, awed silence to the pearls of wisdom that roll from his tongue, and David's classes respectfully accepting his judgements on any issue as the final word.

Rachel does not evidence this view of herself as expert to the same degree, but she does see herself as the undisputed authority in the classroom. She is "the thin giant She behind the desk at the front, the one with the power of picking any coloured chalk out of the box and writing anything at all on the blackboard" (A Jest Of God, p. 7). It is up to her to decide whether the students' drawing or their arithmetic questions are acceptable, and anything she tells them must automatically be the truth. Her authority even extends to the parents of her students. She doesn't hesitate to tell Grace Doherty how she should be looking after her son, until James' mother corrects her sharply, and Rachel realizes that she is being presumptuous in giving her a lesson about the care of her own child. She will freely admit that about her own life she is in utter confusion, but in her classroom, she has to be seen as right in everything she does.

Rick goes through a transformation, at least externally, from believing that he is the expert in the classroom, and that his job is to force students to listen as he tells them what they will need to know about language and literature, to understanding that students will only learn

what they want or need to learn. He initially expresses confidence that his expertise in English, along with an iron fist, will guarantee him success. He gives his students a grammar test, explaining that he needs to identify their deficiencies, so that he can plan the most effective treatment.

> "I'd like to pinpoint some of your most common grammatical faults today, so that I'll be able to plan the remedial work we'll need throughout the term. . . . Don't be afraid of making mistakes. That's what I want to find out. When I discover your weak spots, I'll be able to fix them. Is that clear?" (The Blackboard Jungle, p. 89)

As far as the reader can tell, Rick's delivery of this speech is entirely one-dimensional. Neither the narrator or Rick himself seem to connect this speech with the ensuing hostility of the class, or recognize that it might be received as insulting and condescending. He gives the test orally, choosing students one at a time to supply the correct word from the two choices given. With no consultation or hesitation, the class decides as one body to give the wrong answer to every question, even when the answer is obvious. Rick is no further ahead, and has wasted his time and theirs. He has no idea why, but he does realize that this approach is obviously not working.

After many similar classes, he begins to understand that although he may have an impressive store of information such as the names of parts of speech and the elements of a plot, what he doesn't know is what makes his students tick, what they care about, and why they should spend any time or energy learning something new, if not just because he says so.

> He sensed that the beginning of the teaching process had to come from the kids themselves. He knew, in fact, that there could be no beginning in this school unless the kids desired it. Standing up there in front of the room and throwing facts at them was a waste of time, until they realized that there could be no teaching and no learning unless there was give and take. And rather than spend all his time giving, and hoping they would be taking, he'd decided to let them do a

little giving, let them do all the giving in fact, until this sense of mutual exchange became a habit. (p. 136)

He still views himself as the expert, however, as shown in the description of Rick's exciting lesson which he sees as the "breakthrough" that he has been waiting for. He reads Heywood Broun's short story, The Fifty-First Dragon, which the students find interesting and puzzling because of its allegorical nature. He capitalizes on their interest, and very cautiously leads the discussion exactly where he wants it to go, making sure that they understand exactly what he knows, and wants them to know, about allegory. His image of himself as a teacher who commands respect and authority is underscored by his interpretation of the students' reaction.

> The kids were alive today, and he felt their life, and he responded to them the way they were responding to him, both he and the class thrashing out an allegory they had never seen before. . . . He was tense and tight, and he knew now that the kids were really responding, were really discussing this thing the way it should be discussed, were really giving him something. (p. 274-5)

There is no indication that students may have enjoyed the story for their own personal reasons, or that it might yield more than one interpretation. By the end of the novel, Rick is congratulating himself on his expertise in handling students, rather than on his store of facts, but still shows no indication that students may want to read, write, or talk about things that interest only them.

Anna is the only teacher of the seven whose words and actions are consistent with an unambiguous belief in the kind of learning to which David and Rick pay lip-service. She loves children, and she tries to help them find various ways to express themselves and extend their understanding of the world, but she does not picture herself as an expert on either child psychology or the content of the curriculum. She watches children closely, listens to them carefully, and finds ways to provide activities and materials that they show her they need. She is in awe of the

amount of knowledge that they already have, and seeks only to release and direct it, not to plaster on a lot of meaningless and foreign stuff. "Why plaster on at all when there's so much inside already? So much locked in?" (Spinster, p. 40) She tries to remain in touch with her intuition about how she can help her children to grow, expand and bloom like flowers do with sun and rain, but feels that her knowledge about what they need is pitifully inadequate.

II. What images do they associate with students?

Many of the metaphors used by these teachers to describe their students have already been discussed with regard to the teachers' images of themselves. For example, when Lucy talks about her students as mutineers, and their resistance as a revolt, she is describing in the same image herself as the duly appointed agent of legitimate authority, and the students as illegally upsetting this officially sanctioned and protected arrangement. Students in the classroom are seen by Lucy, George, Rachel, Rick and Allen as exhibiting a kind of anonymity and a mob mentality that makes the group more dangerous and less human than any individual student. Shoving a rebellious student into a closet and calmly locking the door becomes dignified as an "act of summary justice," not simply an act of self-protection on Lucy's part. The student's behavior is a crime, and punishment is a legally and rationally meted out consequence, not a spontaneous emotional reaction. The girls are equated with a wild herd and Lucy with an animal trainer, which assumes that she is just as naturally superior to them as human beings are to the lower animals. She has the same right to deprive the girls in Madame Beck's school of their freedom as humans do to capture a wild animal and train it, through either humane or inhumane methods, to be docile and useful. She is a missionary among a tribe of savages, charged with civilizing a "stiff-necked tribe" of ignorant, dangerous heathens. Presumably, from her nineteenth-century point of

view, it is her responsibility to show them the way to a more British and more enlightened way of life.

Rick repeats at least four of the images that Lucy uses to describe her students. He talks about students as wild animals, but he pushes and plays with the metaphor to make them seem even more dangerous than the animals that Lucy has to tame, and to illustrate the dishonesty and the uselessness of the teacher education program that had failed miserably to prepare him for real live students.

> He taught a lot of kids every day, and every day he went into the blackboard jungle without even knowing how many teeth there were in a lion's mouth. Or how many claws on a lion's paw, or anything about a lion at all. They'd taught him how to milk cows, and now they expected him to tame lions. (The Blackboard Jungle, p. 132)

He shares another of Lucy's expressions when he refers to the students as savages, and again when he says that they are by nature criminals. "Every one is a cheat, a potential thief. Solly was right. We have to keep them off the streets. They should really hire a policeman. It would be funny, he thought, if it weren't so damned serious" (p. 295). He calls them "bad guys," and believes, like Lucy, that they are morally deficient and without consciences because they won't let him and Josh teach. He is a priest and they are sinners that must be saved, except he doesn't have the comparatively easy success that Lucy does in saving the souls of her students, because his are more set in their evil ways and resistant to his ministrations than Lucy's are, and the surroundings at North Manual Trades are even less supportive. "I was the Messiah come to teach. Except even a Messiah wouldn't be heard in this dump" (p. 295).

For Rick, only one student emerges from the threatening, faceless mass that Rick confronts each day. Miller is a black student who has been tested as having the highest I. Q, among the boys in 55-206, Rick's most troublesome class. The students in this class look to Miller for leadership in stirring up trouble, and they also look to him to draw the lines indicating

how far they can go. He volunteers to help Rick with the Christmas pageant, and is capable, cooperative, and friendly. Rick gets to know him, and finds that Miller resists his attempts to fit him into an available mold. He becomes more than an underprivileged black student, a class clown, or a talented musician. He is a boy with dreams that are being frustrated by the educational system, a proud uncle, a capable organizer and leader, and a feeling individual who takes charge of stopping a senselessly violent incident. But in the classroom, he remains the ring-leader of the troublemakers, and continues to waste his own and Rick's time. He becomes Rick's friend, and a real person, and once that happens, Rick can no longer see him the way he does the rest of his students. The changes in both of their lives suggested by the conclusion of the novel come about as a result of the one-on-one and real communication that takes place between them when they let their protective masks drop.

George has a very similar kind of duality in his relationship with students, although he is much more aware of their reactions and sensitive to their opinions of him than Rick is. When he is teaching a class, he thinks of the students in front of him as thick, stupid, cruel, and even loathsome, and seems to believe that they take a mindless and concerted delight in tormenting him. In the hallucinatory classroom scenes, they turn into sadistic, half-animal monsters, more satyr than adolescent.

> The girl's mussed skirt was up around her waist. She was bent face down over the desk and Deifendorf's hooves shuffled in agitation in the narrow aisle. From his sleepy careful grin he was covering her; the whole room smelled like a stable. (The Centaur, p. 45)

Deifendorf is one of George's most troublesome students, but when removed from the rest of the class, he bears little resemblance to the animal described above. Peter joins them after school in George's classroom as his father is scolding the boy, trying to convince him to settle down to his schoolwork so that he doesn't end up wasting his life. He tells him "I'd say you're the itchiest kid I have on my hands this year" (p. 101). The

conversation makes Peter angry and jealous because he can feel that there is caring and genuine emotion on both sides.

> Behind me, the quality of Deifendorf's silence seemed baffled and even hurt. He had a vulnerable side. He loved my father. It pains me to admit it, but there existed between this obscene animal and my father an actual affection. I resented it. I resented how lavishly my father outpoured himself before the boy, as if somewhere in all this nonsense there might be the healing drop. (p. 101-2)

The same thing can also be seen in Allen's references to the students at River High. As a group, they are not interested in learning. They are uncaring and uncared for, and are obsessed with partying, sex and drugs. They are a necessary part of Allen's job, but they don't provide the motivation for what he is doing, and neither he nor the students pretend to do much more than tolerate each other. Most of them are indistinguishable from one another. However, when Allen keeps Romero after class to talk to him about Hazen's offer of a scholarship to Dunberry, he speaks to him as an individual with some choices to make about his life. Although Allen makes the offer in a no-nonsense, take-it-or-leave-it manner, and becomes impatient with Romero's objections, he does care. He wants Romero to do something with his talents. He seems to believe that the most intelligent students have the right to realize their potential, and that a teacher has more of a responsibility to these students than to the majority with average or below average ability. We have seen that Rick's interest in Greg Miller also begins when Rick notices that his I.Q, has been measured as substantially higher than any other student in his class.

At Dunberry, where Allen lives with nine of his students, he gets to know some of them as people. His inspection of the room shared by Romero and Rollins expands his perception of students beyond names on a register or grades on an exam paper.

> On the shelf of his closet, which had been carelessly left open and in which his clothes were rather haphazardly

arranged, there were a half-dozen cartons of chocolate marshmallow cookies, which made Strand smile as he thought of the moments during the night when the pangs of hunger awakened that huge body and his groping through the dark to the cache of childish sweets which would keep him going until breakfast.

By contrast, Romero's side of the room was bare and spartan. The blankets were the olive drab wool ones isssued to every boy and the bed was made with military crispness. There were no photographs and no magazines in evidence and the desk was bare except for a note pad and a neat row of sharply pointed pencils. It was as though Romero had resolved that nothing that he left behind him would reveal any fact to anyone who might be in a position to judge him. . . .

With the difference in tastes of the two young men, one had to wonder how it came about that they could live so harmoniously in one small room and seek out each other's company with such pleasure, as they did at all times. (Bread Upon The Waters, p. 251-2)

Rollins proves to be a good friend to Allen, too, after the two work together closely to get Romero out of jail, and get the money together for his bail.

In these novels, human exchanges like this do not occur in the classroom. The unwritten rule that classroom communication should at least seem to go no deeper than that dictated by the role can be seen in Rachel's silent struggle with herself when she wants to see James' paper, and strikes him because he won't show her. She cannot express anything that she is thinking or feeling, no matter how much she would like to apologize and tell him that she is not callous or cruel. Rachel is one step further removed from her students than any of the rest of the teachers, and is never shown speaking to them in anything but her capacity as Miss Cameron.

This rule applies to all of the teachers except to some extent Anna and David. They both seem to have the rather rare ability in fictional

teachers to look at a class of students and see individuals. Anna very seldom addresses herself to the whole group of students. Her ceaseless stream of comments, questions, directions, reprimands, and praise are directed at individual students that the reader quickly learns to recognize and differentiate from each other. Matawhero is somber, wise beyond his years, and doesn't like to read or write. Mark is a worried, fussy busybody who is suffocated by an over-protective and domineering mother. Patchy is freckled, mischievious, and good-natured, and Bleeding Heart has the biggest smile in the room and is proud to say that he doesn't learn because he is dumb. When Anna looks at them, she looks at them one at a time to see what they are doing, what kind of mood they are in, and what they need.

David shows this same quality, although in Delderfield's novel it seems to be to some extent a result of the narrative structure of the book, which is a recounting of many individual incidents over David's years at Bamfylde, each involving different boys, rather than David's personal interest in each of them. The boys emerge from these stories momentarily, and then recede into the background again once David has solved their particular problem. He does not hesitate to share parts of himself with them, as when, during his first term at Bamfylde, he rescues a frightened and homesick first-term student who is being initiated by a group of older students, and tries to make him feel better by letting him know that he too is still feeling new and unsettled. He makes no secret of the fact that his war experiences left him badly shaken, and he has a heart-to-heart chat with Chad Boyer, one of the older boys, after Beth and little Joan are killed. He tells him that he is not sure he is going to make it. The boy is shocked by David's admission, and tells him, "'But that . . . that's daft, sir! I mean, it's not you at all . . . !'" (To Serve Them All My Days, p. 195). David's answer is a sincere expression of his feelings. "He said, quietly, 'I'm not saying I shall end up cutting my throat. Just that I might feel the need to get away from here, where we spent six happy years. Start again, maybe . . . ', but he couldn't go on (p. 195-6). Boyer convinces him to stay at Bamfylde, where he will at least be among people who care about him. There is, however,

far more distance between David and his students than between Anna and hers, even though the students at Bamfylde are much older than Anna's. This is due both to the teachers' different personalities, and to the way they think about the difference in age and the normative expectations of being a teacher, and to the different narrative techniques used by the two authors.

What are the major sources of conflict, how are they resolved, and how does this make the teacher feel?

The seven teachers discussed in this study all experience some degree of conflict which is connected in some way to their role as teachers. One important source of conflict common to all of these novels, and which has already been discussed fairly extensively, is the process of negotiating the nature of relationships with students, and establishing an appropriate balance of power in the classroom. Much of the imagery in the language of these teachers talking about students very obviously suggests conflict.

All of the teachers assume that they are expected to act as agents of law and order in the classroom, and experience difficulty with this conception in some way. For some of them, like Lucy, David, and Allen, the conflict is short-lived and only mildly troublesome, resolved by determination and a tough, no-nonsense approach. Rick finds it an on-going and consuming problem, but one which he feels he is well on his way to resolving by the end of the novel, because he believes that he has gained the respect and cooperation of at least some of the students. Rachel feels awkward and self-conscious, and is continually aware of how artificial and brittle her teacher voice and mannerisms are. George has no idea how to enforce the kind of discipline in the classroom that he believes is expected. This is just one among his many problems, real or imagined, to which he sees no solution, and an important symbol to him of his helplessness and the extent to which other people control him. Anna's motherly, sensitive and somewhat chaotic approach to learning is in direct

opposition to official policies and expectations for student behavior in the classroom. For all of these teachers, relating to students in the classroom involves some degree of tension as a result of the differing needs and desires of the teacher, the students, and the institution.

Another readily recognizable source of conflict for these teachers emerges out of relationships with authority figures. In five of the seven novels, the conflict is with the principal of the school, while in Anna's case, it is with other individuals in the institutional hierarchy who have the power over the way she does her job. In only one of the novels is there no apparent conflict between the teacher and any superior.

Lucy is hired by Madame Beck to teach English, and she is well aware that her employer has very clear and rigid expectations of a teacher in her school, and that although she never criticizes or corrects a teacher, if she is even once disappointed in the teacher's behavior, he or she will simply not appear for breakfast the next morning. She spies on her teachers, searches their personal effects, uses any machinations that come to mind to satisfy herself that they are conducting themselves according to her standards, and shows absolutely no respect for their dignity or privacy. Lucy does not perceive this as particularly wrong or problematic, however. She accepts that it is Madame Beck's school, and that she has a right to make sure her teachers are behaving as she wants them to, even if it means that Lucy watches and says nothing, pretending to be asleep, while her employer goes through her drawers and the pockets of her garments, or inspects everything in and on her desk when Lucy is away from it. She simply behaves strictly according to the rules, and expresses satisfaction when she sees that she has finally earned Madame Beck's trust, and that she will now be left alone. She is always wary of her employer, and never becomes even remotely friendly with her (she knows that the surest way to earn Mme. Beck's hatred is to assume that she has the capacity to feel human affection of any kind); but she does respect her, accepts her methods as an efficient way to run her school although she finds them personally repugnant, and appreciates the fact that Mme. Beck wholly

approves of her methods. Lucy has no strong opinions of her own about how the girls in the school should be taught English, and her most important priority is to guarantee that she will be allowed to keep her position, so she puts her efforts into discovering what Mme. Beck wants, and then deciding how she can best do that. She very carefully avoids any sort of confrontation with her employer, and seems to experience no conflict whatsoever in assuming the role of teacher exactly as Madame Beck sees it.

Allen also seems to have no quarrels with any of his superiors. There is no mention at all of the administrators at River High, and his first official meeting with Mr. Babcock, the headmaster at Dunberry, creates a favorable impression that Allen has no reason to change after they become better acquainted. "Strand went out of his office, thinking what a decent and intelligent and flexible man" (Bread Upon The Waters, p. 245). Like Lucy, at least until it is suggested that he might be in the process of re-adjusting his thinking by the end of the novel, Allen has no difficulty with the standards and the expectations in either school. He appreciates Babcock's willingness to compromise and to make life as easy for everybody at the school as he can. He keeps the boys and their parents relatively happy, and manages to create an orderly, disciplined environment with very little fuss, and this is exactly what Allen believes he should be doing. It is only in the last seven pages, which is an entry from Allen's journal, that we can see some evidence that he has come to the conclusion that boys in both schools are being cheated by the institution, and that if he takes up a new post with the public school system, he might have a different view of the administration, and might not find it so easy to accept without protest the way things are done, because he is beginning to see that the goals of the institution and the needs of students and teachers are not always compatible.

David is first shown to be in total agreement with almost everything that Algernon Herries, the first headmaster of Bamfylde during his stay there, says and does. When Herries retires, David puts his name up for the

position, and is passed over for a new man, J. D. Alcock, whom he almost immediately locks horns with. This is shown to be partly due to his respect for Herries and his need to cling to his mentor's ways of doing things, and partly due to his resentment at not getting the job himself. He engages in some fairly minor disputes with the new man over new and unfamiliar policies which eventually precipitate an all-out war, but he is confident enough of the strength of his own position that he never feels personally threatened or intimidated by him. He goes to work convincing members of the governing board and the students' parents that Alcock is overly harsh, that he is destroying school morale, and that he has unfairly and unethically criticized David's performance. Just when the board seems to be about to vote in David's favor and fire Alcock, Alcock has a heart attack and dies, which leaves the field clear for David to take over as headmaster, after which he has no difficulties whatever. The members of the board agree unanimously with his ideas and methods, and he is given a free hand to run the school and to make whatever changes he thinks necessary.

Willard Siddley, the principal of Rachel's school, and Mr. Zimmerman, principal of Olinger High School, are seen through Rachel's and George's eyes as remarkably similar figures. Both are pompous and self-important little men, both behave in a correct and not openly hostile manner toward the teachers, but are shown to be dictatorial, petty, condescending and even sadistic. In neither case can we be sure what the principal's real thoughts and motivations are, although Rachel realizes that she may be misperceiving Siddley's behavior and attributing intentions to him, while George never doubts the veracity of his interpretations of Zimmerman's behavior for a moment. Both teachers are frightened of the power that these men possess to take away their jobs, although there is no evidence in either case that this fear is rational or justified. George is so frightened of Zimmerman that in his mind he becomes synonymous with Zeus. "He remembered the thunder. Zimmerman might still be in the building; he never went home. The centaur listened for a rumble upstairs. . . ." (The Centaur, p. 30)

Zimmerman is there, and when George faces him, he is facing the wrath of a malevolent god. "An implacable bolt, springing from the center of the forehead above the two disparately magnifying lenses of the principal's spectacles, leaped space and transfixed the paralyzed victim. The silence as the two men stared at one another was louder than thunder" (p. 31).

Mr. Small, principal of North Manual Trades, is another similar figure, although he is big, loud, and makes no attempt to disguise his bullying of both staff and students. Rick doesn't see very much of Small after his welcoming speech to the staff, in which he warns them that he wants no trouble in his school, until a student accuses Rick of making racist remarks in the classroom. Small calls him in, and without asking Rick for his version of the story, threatens him with the loss of his job. When Rick understands what he is being accused of, he interrupts Small's abusive tirade, and tells him loudly and indignantly that the charge is untrue, and that he will not allow himself to be spoken to like that. As much as Small likes to push people around, Rick's indignant and confident defence catches the narrow-minded principal off guard. He retreats, offers an apology, and asks Rick to let the matter drop. There is no doubt in the reader's mind that Small symbolizes the inability of the harsh, unfeeling, bureaucratic system to crush the spirit of a real teacher and a genuinely strong man like Rick.

Anna's obsessive fear of inspectors has already been pointed out, as well as her fondness for Mr. Reardon, the headmaster of her school. Until she meets Mr. Abercrombie, the very mention of the word inspector is enough to cause Anna to panic. Even when there is not one physically present, the shade of an inspector hides in the rafters of her pre-fab, watching and recording her mistakes. It seems that she has always seen herself as an unconventional teacher, and has insisted on stubbornly opposing official notions of how a proper infant mistress runs her classroom, while at the same time grieving for the loss of prestige this causes. On at least one occasion she was involved in a dispute with the

Director of Education himself over an infant school art curriculum that she developed.

Mr. Abercrombie is different, however, and she likes him almost immediately. He listens to her ideas, and doesn't criticize her methods. Anna is afraid of the displeasure of her superiors, but she is certainly not the hapless victim that she believes herself to be. She knows exactly what she is doing, and deliberately creates each new situation that brings her an unsatisfactory grading, at the same time that she punishes herself mercilessly for doing so. Although she does admit defeat, she is not defeated by representatives of the institution. She fights them without fear or hesitation, and is intractable in the face of their demands, and then makes herself pay the price for their displeasure.

Another source of conflict for these teachers, although not one of the most bothersome, is the degree of control over their private lives that they give up by assuming the role of teacher. M. Paul is horrified when Lucy begins to go out visiting or to a concert occasionally, and thinks that she is behaving scandalously for a teacher.

> "My proceedings seemed at present very unsettled: he [M. Paul] did not know what to make of them: he thought his cousin Beck very much to blame in suffering this sort of fluttering inconsistency in a teacher attached to her house. What had a person devoted to a serious calling, that of education, to do with Counts and Countesses, hotels and chateaux? To him, I seemed altogether 'en l'air.' On his faith, he believed I went out six days in the seven."
>
> . . . He accused me of being reckless, worldly, and epicurean; ambitious of greatness and feverishly athirst for the pomps and vanities of life. (Villette, p. 387)

M. Paul is shown to be possessive of Lucy and jealous of her friends, which accounts for some of this reaction, but Lucy herself is not sure that she should wear the pink dress and put the flowers on her bonnet which are gifts from Mrs. Bretton. She feels that her everyday dun colors are far

more appropriate for a teacher, and M. Paul vehemently reinforces this opinion, in effect calling her a fallen woman for appearing in public in such a costume.

Rachel is very aware that an elementary school teacher is expected to be a model of decent, upright, and moderate behavior. She and Calla joke about Sapphire Travis, another teacher, because she wears shoes that she has dyed pink. They both understand that the shoes are inappropriate in the classroom, and Calla comments that the children all stare at them. The women in Rachel's mother's bridge club invest Rachel with the self-sacrificing, duty-bound mantle of the grade school teacher who lives for her children and has no life of her own. They complacently assign her this role, and tell her that she is a saint for doing it, without knowing anything about her, or wondering if the role fits her or not. "'Well, I think it's marvellous, the way you manage--I always think anyone who's a teacher is marvellous to take on a job like that.' Oh, I enjoy it. 'Well, that's marvellous--don't you think so May?'" (A Jest Of God, p. 23)

David understands quite clearly that both he and any prospective wife of a schoolmaster at Bamfylde must be completely above reproach. He runs into trouble with Alcock when he makes his socialist leanings public by speaking at a campaign rally in support of Christine Forster, who is a Labor Party candidate, and later becomes his wife. Alcock believes that David's duty to the school is to keep his political opinions private and to avoid anything that might bring the school publicity, whether good or bad. David eventually wins the argument, but not without a great deal of unpleasantness. When he is appointed headmaster, the one condition that he puts on his acceptance is that he be allowed to express his political opinions in public, providing that he is away from the school, and that he doesn't deliberately cause the school any embarrassment. Life in a boarding school is seen as even more restrictive, because teachers never escape their role, as they may be able to do in a city, and are always within the watchful gaze of the school community.

Four of the seven teachers do not indicate an awareness that the role restricts their personal freedom. Anna, George, Rick and Allen all seem to behave in their private lives in very much the same way that they would do if they had chosen another occupation. Anna is a spinster, and leads a very quiet life, but she does not seem at all worried that somebody in the community might see her on the several occasions that she and the handsome young male teacher on staff are in the downtown area in her car, or that somebody might wonder why Paul spends so much time in her house, and notice that he is often drunk either before or after these visits, and that she drinks more and stays up later than she should when she entertains him. She complains to Mr. Reardon that she is not feeling well and that she has one of her "heads" the day after a visit from Paul. He tells her that she must take better care of herself, and that she can't make Paul her responsibility, but gives no indication that he thinks her behavior is inappropriate. She assumes that Mr. Reardon knows that she is just trying to get Paul to open up about what is worrying him, and trying to distract him from drinking so much. These are the reasons that she gives herself for encouraging his visits, although the reader knows that they are not nearly as uncomplicated or altruistic.

Rick, Allen and George are all happily married, and all are tempted to begin affairs with female colleagues. In none of the three cases is it the fear of being found out, either within the school or the community, that stops them. In fact, the male teachers on Rick's staff cannot understand why he does not accept Lois Hammond's offer, and when he lets them know that he has no intention of following through on the flirtation, another male teacher does. Judith Quinlan invites Allen to her apartment for a drink when he is upset about a misunderstanding with Leslie. He is attracted by her vulnerability and her willingness to risk her pride by being honest about her feelings for him, and comes very close to giving in to the temptation she offers. Hester Appleton teaches French in the classroom next door to George's. She is unmarried and clearly fond of him, and they both value their long-standing friendship. George goes as far as

to tell her, when he has had a particularly difficult day, and after he is convinced that he will die soon, that she is the woman he should have married. Neither seems to have seriously considered an affair, but this is not, however, a result of community pressures. George knows that Mr. Zimmerman is involved with Mim Herzog, a member of the school board, and it is well known that Vera Hummel, another teacher in the school, is promiscuously unfaithful to her husband. All three men are worried about their wives and marriages, not their responsibility to provide models of moral behavior in the community.

All of these teachers experience various degrees of internal discomfort caused by conflicting conceptions and expectations of the role of teacher that they themselves hold, or between theirs and a pre-existing one that they believe they are expected to adopt. Of the seven considered, Allen seems to feel the least tension between variant images of what a teacher should be. His is a purely content-centered definition of teaching. He accepts his role as that of keeping reasonable order in the classroom while he lectures, gives exams, and assigns grades. He was interested in history, and enjoyed studying it himself. When he realized that there would be no money to continue with graduate studies at Harvard or Oxford, he had to make a decision about what to do next. "The next best thing, he made himself believe, was to get a license to teach history in in high school, where he would at least be working in a field he was devoted to . . . ." (Bread Upon The Waters, p. 44) His passion is history, not working with young people, as he readily admits to Russell Hazen: "My dream was to be a historian, not to feed a few hand-me-down facts about the past to unruly children" (p. 90). He acknowledges that most of his students learn very little, and that the majority of these inner-city adolescents have very bleak futures to look forward to. Until a combination of events makes him re-assess the meaning of everything in his life, he accepts the situation as a fact that he has no control over, and no responsibility to change. Consequently, it doesn't cause him any distress.

Rollins' comment, previously quoted, that he has learned a great deal from Allen that he believes will be valuable, strikes the reader as hollow praise. Nothing else that we know about Allen's attitude toward history, teaching, or his students has suggested that what he has been doing as a teacher has made much of a difference in his students' lives at all. Even Romero's remarks about the differences between Allen and the rest of the Dunberry teaching staff strike the reader as somewhat ironic. He says that Allen is not a time-server like they are, and that he won't spend the remainder of his career "grazing in peace on grass" like they do. Allen's attitude, as expressed to Leslie, to Russell Hazen, and to Judith Quinlan, proves that this is exactly what he has been doing, and at this point, it is what he intends to continue doing.

It seems that it is partly because he has learned to respect Romero's assessment of people that he begins to change his conception of what a teacher should be. It is implied that this new understanding will make a difference in Allen's teaching, and it doesn't seem that there are major obstacles in the way of his being able to translate this knowledge into an altered classroom presence. The conflict for Allen throughout the novel has been his changing interpretation of himself and others. Once he begins to see himself more accurately and becomes aware of the people around him as more than flat projections of what he needs them to be, the understanding starts to crystallize that teaching is a much more complex activity than it has appeared to him for twenty-seven years and he is ready to accept responsibility for trying to precipitate a change for the better in his students' lives.

Like Allen, David believes that one of the primary purposes of his job is to pass on his historical knowledge, but his view is a little bit broader, and more generous to his students. He stresses the importance of turning out not just well-educated but also well-adjusted young men. In order to do this, it is necessary to gain the students' attention and respect, and establish a quiet, orderly atmosphere for learning. He does this by instilling what seems to him to be an appropriate and healthy amount of

fear in the boys. Although he admits to some apprehension about his ability to maintain his composure in the face of rebellious students, and although his nature is for the most part not harsh, cold, or unfriendly, it seems to cause much less of a problem for him than it does for almost any of the other teachers, except perhaps Allen, to demand and maintain discipline and order in his classes. This seems to be largely because it never occurs to David to question whether the authoritarian stance he adopts with his students is anything but the most natural and healthy way to relate to them. He establishes a friendly and paternalistic, but never familiar, relationship between himself and the boys so effectively that he can afford to let down his guard occasionally, allowing his sense of humor and his more human side to show, with no fear that they will step over the invisible line between student and teacher. He has convinced himself that what he believes a teacher should be, and what he is, are one and the same thing, and is unaware that his relationships with his students, and in fact, with everybody around him, are one-dimensional. He has defined himself entirely in terms of his occupation, and simply denies anything that would distort this ideal picture of himself. He never steps outside of the role that he has assigned to himself, and is entirely lacking in the honesty and skepticism required for any kind of meaningful self-appraisal or personal growth, which means that he experiences almost no conflict.

Lucy and Rick both show the same initial uneasiness at adopting the characteristics that they have learned to attribute to teachers as David does. All three manifest some very clear and remarkably similar preconceptions about how teachers behave in the classroom that do not come from any instruction that they have received, and are not expressions of any deliberately or intelligently formulated pedagogical philosophy. Lucy finds it very frightening to walk into a class of girls that she believes will do anything they can to make her life so miserable that she will run to Mme. Beck begging to be let go. She is accustomed to following orders, not giving them. She assumes a bravado that she doesn't feel, puts on a flinty

face, and slips into Mme. Beck's version of a competent teacher, which is quite different from the way she behaves in other situations.

We have seen Lucy at fourteen watching little Pauline, paying close attention to her various moods, and worrying about her happiness and well-being. She takes the child into her bed when she sees her silently grieving for her father, and holds her all night long. We have seen how attentively she cares for Miss Marchmont, the elderly cripple that she looks after until she dies. She displays these qualities again when she nurses Fifine and Georgette, two of Mme. Beck's daughters, through a broken arm and a dangerous fever, even after she is a teacher and no longer has any obligation to do so, simply because they want Lucy, and she wants to be there.

> I affected Georgette; she was a sensitive and a loving child: to hold her in my lap, or carry her in my arms was to me a treat. To-night she would have me lay my head on the pillow of her crib; she even put her little arms around my neck. Her clasp and the nestling action with which she pressed her cheek to mine, made me almost cry with a tender pain. Feeling of no kind abounded in that house; this pure little drop from a pure little source was too sweet: it penetrated deep, and subdued the heart, and sent a gush to the eyes. (Villette, p. 188-9)

Lucy finds great satisfaction in comforting and looking after others, a part of her which she denies completely in her position as a teacher.

Both she and Madame Beck would agree that any sign of warmth or concern for individual students would be a fatal weakness in a teacher who has to maintain absolute control over sixty students at all times. She admits that she loses some sleep planning strategies to keep her image as a stern disciplinarian intact, and is unwilling to let this mask slip even under exceptional circumstances. When Mme. Beck tells the student that M. Paul is leaving the school, and will no longer be their literature teacher, she ignores her own shock and pain, and the sobbing of some of the students, and carries on with her lesson as usual.

> The noise, the whispering, the occasional sobbing increased. I became conscious of a relaxation of discipline, a growing disorder, as if my girls felt that vigilance was withdrawn, and that surveillance had virtually left the classe. Habit and the sense of duty enabled me to rally quickly, to rise in my usual way, to speak in my usual tone, to enjoin, and finally to establish quiet. I made the English reading long and close. I kept them at it the whole morning. . . . A rather weak-minded, low-spirited pupil kept it up when the others had done; relentless necessity obliged and assisted me so to accost her, that she dared not carry on the demonstration, that she was forced to conquer the convulsion.
>
> That girl would have had a right to hate me, except that, when school was over and her companions departing, I ordered her to stay, and when they were gone, I did what I had never done to one among them before--pressed her to my heart and kissed her cheek. But this impulse yielded to, I speedily put her out of the classe, for, upon that poignant strain, she wept more bitterly than ever. (p. 535-6)

The image that governs her behavior in the classsroom is at odds with her natural inclination to sympathize with the sobbing pupils and to allow them some time to absorb the news in their own way. However, she gives no evidence that she has any serious misgivings about her decision to follow the rules of correct classroom deportment for a teacher, at all times and without hesitation, which means that she manages to resolve this conflict fairly quickly and neatly.

Rick comments on the dissidence between his naturally friendly, open and unguarded disposition, and the need to establish a climate for learning in the classroom through repression and intimidation. As with David and Lucy, the reader knows that he is terrified during his first encounters with students; but also as with the other two, he believes it is essential for him to keep this from showing. He is not able to settle the issue as easily or as finally as they do, however. He doesn't like the wall

that his cold, aloof and authoritarian manner creates between himself and the students, but he believes that he needs it. When Miller shares his pride in his new niece, Rick tells him that he and Anne are expecting a baby too, and then immediately regrets this familiarity.

> "My sister had a baby," Miller said, a proud smile forming on his face, a gleaming white smile against the brown of his skin.
>
> "Congratulations," Rick said briefly.
>
> "A boy," Miller said, and Rick wondered what the hell all this was about. He looked at Miller curiously for a moment and then said, "That's very nice, Miller."
>
> "My brother-in-law's overseas," Miller explained. He in the ahmy. Tha's why I took my sister to the hospital. Tha's why I wunt to school that day."
>
> "I see," Rick said, still wondering why Miller was telling him all this. They stood close to each other for a few seconds, neither speaking, the silence closing in around them. Rick was aware of the silence, and he felt enormously awkward.
>
> "My wife's expecting a baby, too," he said suddenly, wondering what had provoked him to tell this to Miller.
>
> "That *right?* " Miller asked, seeming truly interested.
>
> "Yes," Rick said. And then like a fighter who has momentarily lowered his guard and suddenly realizes he's liable to get punched, he said, "I'm busy, Miller." The guard was up again.
>
> The smile disappeared from Miller's face. "What is it, Chief?" he asked. (The Blackboard Jungle, p. 187)

Rick has invested heavily in creating an artificial distance between himself and his students in order to protect his dignity and his reputation as a tough teacher, and he doesn't think he dares to let it drop. He doesn't find it natural or comfortable, and it creates an on-going problem for him, but he doesn't experience an undue amount of anxiety over the disparity between the way his teacher persona behaves, and the way the "real" Rick

would behave. He accepts it as an unavoidable difficulty that comes with the job. At the climax of the novel, he realizes that this neat split into two separate selves is not as inevitable or as desirable as it once seemed, and that whether he wants to or not, he can only relate to his students as a whole human being.

Rachel makes the same assumptions about the need for a split between her inner self and her teacher self. She tells the reader that she is confused, disoriented, and torn between her wish to treat the children with the honest affection that she feels for them, and the picture she has in her head of a teacher as cool, calm, confident, and detached. She fears dire consequences if she were to admit her human fallibility in the classroom, but once she is forced to make this admission to herself with respect to the whole of her life, she undergoes a radical shift in her perceptions of the world around her. Like Allen, she re-evaluates her life, and re-orients herself with a new clarity of vision. We have to suspect that the insights she has so painfully acquired would make it impossible for her to carry her old fear of being seen as real, vulnerable and imperfect into future teaching situations.

Just as all of the teachers mentioned above do, George believes that he should have undisputed mastery in the classroom. In his comments to Doc Appleton, quoted earlier, he equates being a good teacher with having the "gift of discipline." However, his nature is much less suited to the task of issuing orders and enforcing obedience than any of the others. At least in his own eyes, he wages a daily battle with his students, and each day he loses a little bit more of his dignity and self-respect. Even though he does not respect or like the principal, he judges his own teaching by Zimmerman's standards, and finds himself deficient. "'Zimmerman has the gift of discipline and us poor devils under him who don't have it, he just laughs at us. I can hear him laughing every time the clock ticks'" (The Centaur, p. 131). He seems not to have even considered the possibility that Zimmerman may be mistaken, not himself. The pain in his stomach is an expression of his gnawing anxiety and his sense of impotence. Holidays

are spoiled by the knowledge that he will have to go back to the same thing once they are over. He tells Deifendorf that he doesn't want his students to like him, that he wants them to fear him, but we know that he isn't fooling even himself with this talk. He has never learned how to pretend to be something he is not, and he is not mean, tough, or insensitive. He knows and cares that Judy Lengel is a nice but not very bright girl who has a father that expects too much of her and pushes her too hard. Because he feels sorry for her, he lets her take shameless advantage of him, and pry the questions out of him the day before a quiz. He knows that he is a pushover and that he doesn't frighten anybody, and considers this a fatal flaw. What he doesn't recognize or value is that students do learn important things from him, and remember the personal attention he gives them. He never understands this conflict as anything other than complete failure on his part, and he simply chooses not to continue the fight.

George has what Anna would call "an ill that's not for mending," as she does herself. Her struggle is just as painful and her problem just as impossible for her to solve as George's is for him. She wants to help her Little Ones to flourish, and she can only do that by being herself and accepting them for who they are. She believes that teaching is finding ways to enable children to develop and to express themselves, not making them mindlessly follow a generic program according to a rigid schedule, as the other infant mistresses and the inspectors try to convince her it is. Her personal understanding of what it means to teach seems to her irreconcilable with the official definition; and she, like George, assumes that the failure and the blame belong to her, since the people who are asking her to change did not obtain their positions of power in the system by being wrong. She is merely a classroom teacher, and, as Anna says; " I should have obeyed the inspectors all these years. Fancy teaching as though I knew more about children than they do" (Spinster, p. 82). She can't accept the possibility that the entire system may be mistaken, and the only other logical possibility seems to be that she is. She becomes too

exhausted to continue trying to make sense of this discrepancy, and, like George, she decides that she has no more courage or energy to fight.

Do they see themselves as successful, or as failures?

In looking at these characters, and making a decision about whether they see themselves as having succeeded in their careers and in their lives, two observations become apparent immediately. The first is that for six of the seven teachers discussed, their evaluation of whether or not they have been successful in their careers seems to be synonymous with their evaluations of their lives as a whole. The second, not surprisingly, is that three consider themselves as unqualified successes and two view themselves as having completely failed at teaching, while the remaining two do not fit neatly into either category.

Lucy is very happy with herself as a teacher, and is well-respected by Mme. Beck, M. Paul, and the other teachers in the school. She tells us that the small day school that M. Paul set up for her before he left for Guadaloupe did very well, and that she managed to buy the adjoining property and expand it from a day school into a combined residential and day school. She does make the distinction, however, between being successful in her work and being satisfied by it. She never stops longing for a more complete life, one with people and relationships that will allow her to rise above the petty concerns of a hum-drum life. Her teaching seems to be the only thing in Lucy's life that ever has, or ever will, turn out well for her. She has spent her whole life plodding along stoically, facing one loss after another, and there seems to be no doubt that she is destined to lose M. Paul also. This is the only one of the novels looked at in this study in which the central character has a happy teaching career within an otherwise disastrous personal life. Lucy seems remarkably capable of separating herself from her work, which is not really surprising considering that one of Lucy's defining psychological traits is her ability to detach her inner self from whatever happens to be occupying the surface level of her mind at the moment.

Rick and David would both say that their careers have been enormously successful. Rick has many bad moments during his first semester at North Manual Trades High, but his feeling is that he has learned an enormous amount, and that his sincere effort and his stubborn refusal to accept failure have paid off. He feels smug and superior to the other teachers around him. The end of the book describes him sitting contentedly in the staff room listening to the cynical chatter and looking forward to his first class of the afternoon, because he has discovered the secret of being a good teacher.

David is much less restrained than Rick about expressing the contentment he feels. His years at Bamfylde seem to him in retrospect to have been weighted very heavily on the positive side. Teaching has saved his health and given him a secure if modest income, good friends, and the satisfaction of seeing hundreds of boys pass through the school and go on to be productive citizens. At no point does he even make passing mention of regrets, mistakes, or things that he might have done instead. David is a man who milks all the happiness out of life that it has to give, and is not in the habit of worrying or examining his conscience; so from his point of view, his career has been an unmixed triumph.

Anna and George, on the other hand, emphatically and unequivocally announce that their careers have consisted of nothing but one failure and disappointment after another. Neither of them can live up to their own impossibly unrealistic images of what a teacher should be, given their personal limitations and the limitations of the situations they are working in; but they are unable to settle for anything less. Even though they are not doing a terrible job by any of the objective standards that they hold up as proof that they are, they cannot see anything except the things that they would like to be able to do differently. They see their difficulties as resulting from personal flaws, not from external circumstances. They believe that these problems are permanent--it is not within their power to change them--and they allow them to pervade every aspect of their lives. Both George and Anna are archetypal pessimists

according to Martin Seligman's (1991) definition, and as such, they are stuck in their own negative thoughts and they ruminate about them obsessively. They are both particularly poignant in their helplessness, because they are intelligent, capable, loving people who have been programmed to believe only the worst about themselves.

It is more difficult to decide whether Rachel and Allen are successful or not. Both grow enormously through the course of the novels, and both gain valuable new understandings as a result of the crises they face. Rachel is heading off to Vancouver with her mother, determined to build a new life based on her own truths rather than allowing other people to define who she is and what she may and may not do. Allen is suddenly alone and on the verge of starting a new life based on a fuller understanding of who he is and what he wants. He has had to admit that his life has been based on some faulty assumptions, and by the end of the novel, he would not say that the twenty-seven years he has spent teaching have been successful. He regrets the time he has wasted, and the severity of the jolts that have been necessary to shake him out of his complacency.

He has just realized this, however, while Rachel has been tormented for fourteen years by the knowledge that she is merely surviving as a teacher. She feels that the time she has spent with students has made no permanent impression, or any real difference in their lives. They pass out of her care and on to the next grade, and very shortly forget her entirely. She would definitely not say that her career up to this point has been positive or productive. However, both she and Allen are hopeful about their futures. They have become newly wise and have been given a second chance, and they fully intend to get it right this time. In this sense, their stories leave the reader with the anticipation of a new beginning, rather than a feeling of closure as in the other five novels.

Implications for teaching

As with any research, many interesting insights and questions have emerged from this study besides the tentative conclusions relating to the initial questions. One obvious and possibly cliched observation, which I nevertheless feel obliged to point out, is the emphasis by these novelists on the distinction between success as a teacher and effective teaching. The intent of this study was to determine how the teachers in these novels perceived their work, not to comment on the appropriateness or efficacy of their methods, although I am quite certain that my own biases have become apparent in my discussions of the teachers' methods and philosophies.

What struck me very forcefully was that the teachers who expressed the most anxiety about what they were doing, and were shown in the novels to be considered the least effective by institutional standards, were the ones who cared the most about what they were doing. Anna and George both consider themselves failures in the classroom, and both are shown to receive official criticism in the form of mediocre evaluations; but from what the novelists show happening in their classrooms and from the interactions described between them and their students, they are indisputably more effective in promoting real learning and encouraging the growth of individual students than the teachers who were much more confident about what they were doing and who had much less trouble fitting into the institutional definition of a competent teacher.

Four of the other five teachers fit more or less comfortably into the institutional mold, but are shown to be lacking both in intellectual zeal and the ability to relate to students in a satisfying way. They are not interested in furthering their own learning. What they want to do is pass on some of what they already know to students in an efficient way. Lucy is the only one of the four who is shown studying anything new, and she does so only at M. Paul's insistence, and to prove to him that she is not stupid. She is highly praised by Mme. Beck and fits into her school without causing a ripple, but Lucy's intelligence or her ability to stimulate curiosity in her

students are definitely not among the qualities that Mme Beck looks for. Lucy very deliberately remains cold and detached with her students, and sees no problem with establishing relationships in the classroom based on ridicule and humiliation. She sneers at her students' intellectual ineptitude, their laziness, and their lack of character, but doesn't seem to see this as impeding in any way her ability to teach them.

Rachel says that she has been given no reason to believe that Willard Siddley is dissatisfied with her teaching. She has obviously been doing an acceptable job for fourteen years. We get the impression in the few brief classroom scenes in the novel that she displays the same kind of correct and conscientious but unimaginative and lifeless teacher behavior that Lucy does. She suffers private torments about her inability to form close, meaningful bonds with her students, but displays no evidence of this concern in the classroom.

Rick has expressed frustration at the fact that he is accomplishing very little in his lessons, and this has been demonstrated vividly through scenes in the classroom. He hopes that when Mr. Stanley, the English department head, observes several of his lessons, that he will tell him what he is doing wrong. However, Stanley offers no suggestions, presumably finding Rick's teaching satisfactory. The only fault that the administration brings to his attention, and the reason that the department head visited in the first place, is an accusation by a student that Rick used racist epithets during his lessons, which he very quickly convinces the principal is untrue. Rick's interest in his students and the thought he gives to devising an effective pedagogical approach are apparently motivated entirely by his desire to make himself look good. His goal, to make a difference in just one student's life, is absurdly shallow and constructed to allow him to feel good about an absolutely minimum level of accomplishment.

For twenty-seven years, Allen seems to have been almost totally unconcerned about his students' learning, their lives, or their futures. At the conclusion of the novel, he is just beginning to consider making any kind of a real investment of himself in his teaching.

David is a bit of a special case in this respect, because he does care about his students, and about doing a good job, and he truly believes that he has succeeded. He devotes himself almost exclusively to helping them in whatever way he can, with any kind of difficulty, and is genuinely concerned that they go on to he happy and prosperous futures. He is saddened and dismayed by the waste of the lives of Bamfylde students who leave school only to be killed in war. If the reader asks whether his dedication has resulted in the complete success that he says it has, it is with an uneasy sense that to do so might mean to project some values and expectations into a context in which they are inappropriate.

Another strong impression created by these novels is that the nature of the conflicts that arise are at least to some extent, and in some ill-defined way, connected to the fact that these characters are teachers. After reading nineteen novels about teachers and then selecting seven to concentrate on for this study, it has become clear to me that there is a societal and institutional definition of teacher that limits the range of choices that a novelist is likely to make about the kinds of problems that a teacher character will struggle with. Many of the problems experienced by the teachers spring from their unique characteristics and histories; but the ones that are of the most concern in these novels arise from the limitations, the possibilities, and the difficulties inherent in the given definition of the role. Some of the teachers accept these constraints with a minimum of discomfort and some find them impossible to adapt to, but there definitely seems to be a connection between the novelists' understanding of the role of teacher, the kind of person that they depict as choosing this role, and the problems the characters experience.

This is not to say that we can draw parallels between the teachers portrayed in these novels and people who are teachers in actuality, or that there is not a great range of personality types represented in people who teach children for a living. Novelists may have many reasons for choosing to present teachers in a particular light, particularly when the teacher is a minor character, and the novelist wants the reader to recognize the sweet,

pretty, young female teacher, or the tough-as-nails teacher that students are afraid of, with a minimum of description. Many studies have shown that there are without doubt easily recognizable stereotypes in the literature. Any attempt at exploring the nature of these stereotypes, or where they come from, must be highly speculative. We have to keep in mind that just as we might imagine that novelists drink too much, throw tantrums when they are frustrated or blocked, and are subject to fits of moodiness and depression, so might a novelist be more likely to use the prevailing conceptions of teachers in literature, unless he or she has a personal or artistic reason for cutting across the grain. These types fulfill a literary purpose, and they do have an impact on perpetuating the stereoptypical notions about teachers in our culture.

The authors of these seven novels, however, each had a unique purpose and artistic vision in mind when they chose teaching as an occupation for the protagonists of their novels, and for the decisions they made to represent them in particular ways, which don't seem to stem from the wish to portray the teacher-character as a type, with the possible exception of Irwin Shaw's Bread Upon The Waters. Charlotte Brontë, Sylvia Ashton-Warner, and Evan Hunter were all teachers for at least some period of time, and were obviously drawing more or less directly from their own experiences, and would have a different perspective than the authors who did not teach. Charlotte Brontë travelled to Belgium to teach for a period of time herself, and it is not surprising that she chose a foreign school when trying to create an exotic setting for Lucy Snowe's adventures, but one that she was familiar enough with to create believably. Sylvia Ashton-Warner was a dedicated and committed educator, and although Spinster is not autobiographical, it would appear that for her the novel was a way to create a public forum for her ideas about necessary educational reforms, as well as to work out for herself some strong and confusing emotions about her life and her work. She is very sympathetic to Anna Vorontosov and clearly identifies with her struggles to create her own teacher identity within a system that demanded a cookie-cutter approach to education. Evan Hunter's

novel is also a call for reform to the existing system, but does not communicate to me the insight, the sensitivity, or the deep conviction of Ashton-Warner's. Hunter taught for one year at a vocational high school in New York, and quit to answer telephones for the Bell Telephone Company before he wrote the novel. It seems that for him, writing the novel was a way to exorcise a difficult experience, and also to denounce the teachers and the school system that he obviously saw as failing very badly.

John Updike is one of the authors who was not a teacher, and is therefore looking at the system as an outsider. He does, however, have a great deal of empathy for George Caldwell, and the novel feels as if the author has personal as well as artistic reasons for emphasizing George's distress and the poor fit between the man and his occupation. It is not an attempt to sentimentalize or exploit a character that Updike believes can easily be made pitiful. The honest and understated emotion and the contradictory points of view make me feel that the author is attempting to work through ambivalent and painful feelings toward someone who was very close to him.

We do not sense this same degree of intimacy between Margaret Laurence and her protagonist, Rachel Cameron. Laurence has chosen one resident of the imaginary town of Manawaka who may represent a grade school teacher that she had known from the outside, and been curious about, at some time in her own life, and has created a rich and believable interior life for her. In Ashton-Warner's novel, the author's voice melds with Anna's so that we are never sure if there is a difference. Part of the genius of Laurence's story is that we sense that it is clearly Rachel's own story, told in her own voice. The voice of the author has become less intrusive, it is simply the medium through which Rachel speaks.

R. F. Delderfield's novel is much more nostalgic than the others, and seems like an attempt to capture and preserve under glass a vanishing way of life that to him seems idyllic in retrospect. He is gazing with satisfaction on the past, while Irwin Shaw seems to be focusing nervously on the future. Shaw's purpose seems to be highly political as well as artistic. He

sees huge inequalities in American society with regard to who has access to power and wealth. Even though David comes from a poor mining community and definitely leans to the left politically, there seems to absolutely no attempt to shake up or question the existing system, even after he moves into a position of leadership in an expensive, private boarding school, one of the institutions that perpetuates the kind of inequalities that caused his father's death in a coal mining-accident. Delderfield seems unaware of the irony of his portrayal of David as a staunch supporter of the existing power structure, and that David might have found this position to be a very difficult one.

Shaw, on the other hand, puts his message in the mouth of Jesus Romero, the precocious, street-wise student, that the power structure is not fixed and unassailable, and that moguls like Russell Hazen can be destroyed by the people that he attempts to manipulate and control. Allen Strand is a symbol of the middle class, and of the educational system. He moves from the public school system, which is designed to keep the masses exactly where they are, to a private school, which reproduces men like Hazen, who will be the future leaders through the right of birth and privilege. Allen has been complacently absorbed in his own life, and finally wakes up and realizes that he has some responsibility to help to create the kind of society he wants, and to fight the oppressive influences whose only interest is in preserving and replicating the existing structure. Shaw seems to have an interest in teachers and the educational system only in a very general sense, which probably explains why Allen comes across as the most generic of the teachers in these novels.

We can see then that at least among these novels, there is no obvious thread that would seem to connect the authors' personal biographies or motives for writing these novels with the way the teachers are depicted. They look at teachers and education from a broad range of points of view. The striking similarities that have emerged in terms of how the teacher characters envision their role and their function as teachers, in the ways they think and talk about themselves in this role, and the ways they are

shown behaving in the classroom, must be contained within a long-standing and fairly inflexible societal definition of teacher, not in the author's intent or the artistic requirements of the genre.

This fact became even more obvious when I looked at these novels in relation to a survey of the thoughts and feelings of real teachers done by Catherine Collins and Douglas Frantz, which they have reported in their book Teachers Talking Out Of School (1993). I was struck by a resonance in the novels of the themes, the images, the conflicts, and the ways of understanding their work that the teachers interviewed by Collins and Frantz talked about. Their book is a report of the views of more than 150 schoolteachers in 70 schools across the United States concerning the daily problems and the rewards of their work, and the direction of the American school system in the 1990's.

The most common concerns and themes that emerge in the novels about teachers are reflected in the groupings by theme of the stories told by the teachers that Douglas and Frantz interviewed. Their explanations about why they chose to become teachers and to remain in the profession are strikingly similar. It will be seen that many of the teachers in the novels initially had aspirations to do something else with their lives, but because they found this to be impossible or impractical for various reasons, they chose to teach instead. Marion Clermont told Collins and Frantz that she grew up wanting to be an actress. She never made it to the stage or screen but says that she has found teaching to be a satisfactory alternative, although not because she enjoys children, or stimulating creativity and the desire to learn. For her, as we saw with Rick Dadier and David Powlett-Jones, teaching is a performance by the teacher. "I found it to be a great outlet in terms of acting, performing five times a day." (p.30) Mark Mattson always wanted to be a painter. While studying at the Art Institute of Chicago, he met a woman, fell in love, and decided that he should find a way to pay the bills, so he became an art teacher. The route that led him into teaching is almost identical to the ones described by Allen Strand and George Caldwell.

Some of the other recurring themes of the stories that the teachers told the two reporters had to do with students. They acknowledged the importance of traditional aspects of the teacher's role--excercising control, establishing discipline, and meting out punishment in the classroom. Poverty, neglect, divorce, and upsets in students' home lives were a source of concern, as were the ways that students have changed over time, and the ways that they have remained the same. Problems caused by the increasing diversity of the student population surfaced repeatedly in their comments. They talked about an awareness of the effects of an actual and/or perceived increase in violence in schools, and the perception of a lack of respect and appreciation by the public for teachers and their work.

The feelings expressed by the teachers in Teachers Talking Out Of School--that they are not respected or listened to; that they are controlled by circumstances, the system, and other people; that teaching is a second-choice lifestyle; and that they are disappointed and frustrated by the obstacles that prevent them from doing the job that they want to do--permeate their words. The surprise expressed by Collins and Frantz at the bleak picture painted by the teachers they spoke to sounded very much like my own shock at the degree of apathy, confusion, cynicism and despair that I found in my reading of novels about teachers. "Their insights were darker than we expected, reflecting the gravity of the plight of the schools" (p.251).

There are two issues that emerge out of my study of the novels that seem to me to be of particular significance for teachers, and those of us who work with prospective teachers. One is the recognition of how resistant to change the cultural definition of the role of teacher has been. It seems to me that if a student learns only one thing in a teacher education program, it should be how to critically analyze and evaluate the kinds of attitudes and images that have surfaced repeatedly in these novels, and in all forms of cultural expression. Accepting any given definition as the only right and proper one and ignoring one's own values and needs is shown in these novels to lead in one of two directions: either to mindless,

uninspired and ritualized teaching, or to a high degree of distress and inner turmoil--what we would call "teacher burnout" in current professional jargon--and even suicide.

The other important issue, the need for personal and professional freedom within the profession, is inextricably connected with, and arises out of, the first. None of the fictional teachers examined in this study understood themselves to be free to contribute to the definition of their function in a thoughtful, intelligent way. The evidence has shown that the struggle for most of them revolved around how to make themselves fit into the given mold, not how to participate in negotiations about how the role would be defined. Teachers either attempted to assume the role, and accepted the restrictions that it placed on developing meaningful relationships with students and generating enthusiasm for real learning; or they were unwilling or unable to conform to this definition, and found the price of being different was too high. Many beginning and experienced teachers find themelves in the same hopeless position as Anna Vorontosov, George Caldwell, Rick's friend Josh Edwards in The Blackboard Jungle, and Meredith, the pitiable, diabetic young teacher that David Powlett-Jones meets at Bamfylde. They can't transform themselves into anything resembling the prevailing image of a teacher, and have no access to information about alternative conceptions. All they find themselves able to do is to give up, and blame themselves for their failure.

Deborah Britzman (1991, 1994) makes this point very effectively. As she sees it, the construction of identity does not happen in isolation. It is, rather, the result of a socially negotiated struggle. "Our identities, overdetermined by history, place, and sociality, are lived and imagined through the discourses or knowledge we employ to make sense of who we are, who we are not, and who we can become. (1994, p. 58). In this struggle, our own *internally persuasive discourses*, which are the beliefs and images that we have constructed about who we are and what we want (a centrifugal force), are continually colliding with the *authoritative discourses* of other individuals and groups, which are the pre-existing

understandings, expectations, and norms that we encounter when we attempt to incorporate a new role into our identity (a centripedal force). Identity can be viewed as a struggle for voice and thought when we are surrounded by voices and thoughts that are not our own. Understanding the conflicts and tensions inherent in this struggle to define oneself and to be heard in a setting which privileges certain discourses at the expense of others is an essential key to unlocking the meaning of the fictional teachers' stories that I have considered, and to helping teacher education students assume control of authoring and directing their own stories.

After examining the teachers in these seven novels, and looking at the ways they think and talk about their work, it has become obvious to me that there is much to be learned from the study of teachers in fiction. Not only can real-life teachers benefit from the thoughts and the insights of the individual authors and the characters they have created, but taken together, they give us a very good picture of how subtle and invisible but compelling the institutional and cultural influences are that told these characters how they should behave in and out of classrooms with students, before they ever became teachers. If we can raise these images to a conscious level, examine them, and recognize when we are acting according to a script that was written long ago, and may or may not be appropriate and desirable in a different context, we will have the freedom to make more intelligent and reasoned decisions about our own conduct, and whether to accept or to reject beliefs that we find oppressive and dehumanizing for ourselves and our students. Examining images of teaching, consciously thinking about the ones we hold, and working at creating new and more personally meaningful ones can have several important effects, as Joseph Fischer and Anne Kiefer (1994) point out. Doing so might help us to develop and manifest a deeper understanding of our work, and might help us to create more consonance between our images of ourselves and our behaviors in the classroom. It may also help new teachers to anticipate the disparate images of teaching they will be faced with in the schools, and allow them to think about how the school

culture either supports or denies the new teacher's image of teaching. Most significantly, I believe, it might mean that our work with students will be enhanced by a deeper and fuller understanding of our sense of self.

> Even the strongest teachers, those who actively construct images of their work, are heavily influenced by the often uncaring and negative environment in which they teach. Positive teacher images compete with cultural images that far too often do not nurture the teacher as educator. . . . The challenge is to find images that liberate us and take us to a deeper awareness of ourselves, of others, and of the world. We believe that conscious focus on images and their influence will help free both the teachers and society from imposed images and the damage these imposed images may cause. (p.52)

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